

FROM STRESS TO STRENGTH: PSYCHOLOGY'S APPROACH TO COLLEGE LIFE CHALLENGES

EDITOR
Aashna Narula



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Editor

Aashna Narula

Founder, Director, Psychopedia

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PREFACE

Welcome to from “**Stress to Strength: Psychology’s approach to College Life Challenges**” a collection of insightful and inspiring chapters that delve into the multifaceted journey from experiencing stress to building strength. In this volume, we aim to explore the diverse mechanism through which individuals and communities transform challenges into opportunities for growth, healing and empowerment.

In today’s fast paced and often tumultuous world, stress has become an almost ubiquitous element of daily life. Whether, stemming from personal, professional or societal sources, the impact of stress can be profound and far reaching. However, withing the stress lies the potential for strength, an opportunity to develop resilience and a deeper understanding of oneself and others.

The book brings together a diverse group of authors, each contributing their perspectives and expertise on the subject. Through empirical research and theoretical explorations our contributions examined the transformative processes that lead to strength.

Our chapters cover a wide range of topics, including, Cyberbullying, Inclusive education, mental health stigma, career anxiety, online dating, internet addiction, views on non binary identities, healthcare pathways, self-concealment, love bombing, AR-VR in mental health and economies of time management.

Each chapter offers valuable insights and practical strategies that readers can apply in their own lives or professional practices.

We are deeply grateful to our contributors for their dedication and for sharing their knowledge and experiences. Their work not only enriches our understanding of the problems but also inspires hope and action. We also extend our heartfelt thanks to our readers, who we hope will find this book a valuable resource in their own journeys from stress to strength.

As an editor, I am honored to present this collection and contribute to the ongoing dialogue on college life challenges. It is my belief that by understanding and harnessing the power of strength, we can better navigate the complexities of college life challenges and emerge stronger, more capable and more connected.

Aashna Narula
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ROLE OF EMERGING AI, VR AND AR IN MENTAL HEALTH PRACTICES AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

The current study is focused on the usage of recent technologies such as AI, VR and AR, in mental health practices among college students. Artificial intelligence (AI) stands for a field of study where attempts are made to develop human-like intelligence, using computer programs such as machine learning. Similarly, virtual reality and augmented reality are the technologies that enable one to create a real-time controlled virtual environment. Analysing the work and personal responsibilities, good mental health practices among college students are the need of the hour as various research has shown the vulnerability of this population. The current study has worked as a bridge, to gain insight into how the above-mentioned technologies can be used in different scenarios to help a counsellor and a researcher to practice mental health care. The review suggests that AI can be used in assessment, as highly programmed machine learning has a significant ability to identify any disorders before they can occur. Similarly, AR and VR technologies can be used in various therapeutic settings, as it enables the counsellor to create and control a virtual environment where the client can work on their issues. Among college students, these technologies can play a significant role because of their adaptability to them. However, the constant usage of AI, VR and AR can make them dependent and alter their sense of reality. Thus, more research needs to be done on a safer way of applying modern technology to mental health practices.

Keywords: AI, VR, AR, Mental Health, College Students

INTRODUCTION

Technology's growth has made everything much easier than it was several decades ago. Some examples include communication, travel, education, healthcare, entertainment and more. Technological advancements in the field of psychology aren't an exception, starting from many statistical software to help in research to new web-counselling services using Google Meet and other software, technology has made its way. Artificial intelligence (AI), Augmented Reality (AR), and Virtual Reality (VR) are some of the latest names floating over the advancements of technology. Many new findings show their greater applicability in mental health care practices. Artificial intelligence, which stands for man-made human-like intelligence that focuses on reducing human workload using machine learning, and AR and VR, the new tools that alter one's perception of reality by combining the role of retina and lenses.

Some of the instances where one can apply these new technologies are; using new AI models to create new virtual counsellors with programmed professional skills which can reduce the rate of unethical and dangerous practices by several humans, use of VR and AR in visualisation therapies like systematic desensitisation etc. The emergence of AI dates to the year 1956, when two geniuses, Newell and Simon created the "Logic Theorist", also known as the thinking machine (Gugerty, 2006). The purpose behind the creation of artificial intelligence was to create a machine that can think and

solve problems like humans, some science fiction movies like *Her* (2013) and *Terminator* (1984) were based on the same principle.

Virtual reality (VR) is a technology that generates simulated worlds that users can explore and interact with. VR is wearing a headset that takes the individual to a distant place or the inside of a video game. It serves as a tool for instruction, training, and amusement. Immersion experiences have been a goal of inventors since the 1950s, and by the 2010s, technological developments had finally made virtual reality headsets available to the public. AR began in the 1960s when American inventor Ivan Sutherland created the "Sword of Damocles" at the University of Salt Lake City (Svarmony, 2023). On the other hand, the provision of treatment, evaluation, psychotherapy, counselling, or similar activities to individuals, couples, families, or groups for behavioural, cognitive, social, mental, or emotional illnesses, especially those involving interpersonal or private issues, is referred to as mental health practice.

Bell et al. (2020), believed VR is a potentially powerful technology that can help in mental health assessment, their study also listed out some advantages of using VR technology in mental health assessment, i.e., enhancing ecological validity, researcher and counsellor can control and manipulate the virtual environment, real-time automated data capture, and many more. Modern artificial intelligence (AI), and machine learning in particular, is being utilised to develop prediction, detection, and treatment solutions for mental health care with the emergence of digital approaches to mental health. AI is being used in therapy to improve user experience and maximise individualised mental health care through digital interventions, including web and smartphone apps (D'Alfonso, 2020).

LINA, an augmented reality (AR) smartphone-based serious game, seeks to improve peer interaction, school climate, and student-teacher engagement while providing a safe environment for reflection on mental health (MH) and external stressors related to family circumstances. The entire class (age 10+) plays LINA in the classroom with their teacher. Through an iterative co-development process with young people, an interdisciplinary team of dramatists, software developers, psychologists, and artists produced LINA. Based on data from qualitative focus groups and the Game User Experience Satisfaction Scale (GUESS-18), the game was found to have good acceptability and preliminary efficacy. One way to use adolescents' propensity for digital technology is to use AR, cooperative gaming in a shared physical environment, and a shared immersive story to enhance SB and real-world social connections among teenagers (Mittmann et al., 2022).

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND MENTAL HEALTH

According to Graham et al. (2019), "Artificial intelligence (AI) technology holds both great promises to transform mental healthcare and potential pitfalls." Similarly, Lee et al. (2022) said, "The use of AI in mental healthcare and neurobiological research has been modest. Given the high morbidity and mortality in people with psychiatric disorders, coupled with a worsening shortage of mental healthcare providers, there is an urgent need for AI to help identify high-risk individuals and provide interventions to prevent and treat mental illnesses". "Also, the COVID-19 pandemic has increased the risk of further erosion of the mental well-being in the population. Therefore, it is relevant to assess the current status of the application of AI toward mental health research to inform about trends, gaps, opportunities, and challenges." (Tornero-Costa et al., 2023).

A study by Straw and Callison-Burch (2020), tell us about a Psychiatric model of natural language processing (NLP) that studies how biases emerge from a clinical, data science, and linguistic perspective by methodically assessing each step of model creation. By carefully evaluating each stage of the model-building process, psychiatric models of natural language processing (NLP) investigate how biases arise from a clinical, data science, and linguistic perspective. Biases present in these

technologies and offer suggestions for preventing similar negative effects in the future. The difficulties and potential paths in artificial intelligence for mental health care are ever-changing and complex. To fully utilise artificial intelligence (AI) in bettering mental healthcare, it is imperative to engage in ongoing research and development, ensure model validation and transparency, and establish strong regulatory frameworks. These initiatives will be crucial in determining how mental health therapy develops in the future and making it more ethical, practicable, and accessible for people as AI technologies advance said Olawade et al. (2024).

VIRTUAL REALITY AND MENTAL HEALTH

Greg and Tarrier (2007), states that “The main focus of VR is interaction and it may be assumed that as the technology improves and enables greater interaction that the effectiveness of VR as a therapeutic tool should also increase.” “Initially designed for the treatment of phobias, the use of virtual reality in phobic disorders has expanded to other mental health disorders such as posttraumatic stress disorder, substance-related disorders, eating disorders, psychosis, and autism spectrum disorder.” (Emmelkamp & Meyerbröcker, 2021).

Virtual reality possesses the capacity to revolutionise the evaluation, comprehension, and management of mental health issues. Only when the most immersive VR technology is paired with focused translational interventions, with the user experience at the centre of design, can the therapy potential be realised. Virtual reality's ability to imitate reality has the potential to expand access to psychological therapy significantly, and its capacity to construct new realities may improve treatment outcomes. VR might be worthy of the same consideration as neuroimaging. An extensive analysis of empirical research was carried out. A total of 285 papers were found, of which 154 dealt with therapy, 45 with theory development, and 86 with assessment. Anxiety (n = 192), schizophrenia (n = 44), substance-related disorders (n = 22), and eating disorders (n = 18) were the primary disorders that were studied.

There are several useful applications for mental health. Though there are several promising research and treatment paths, the most well-established discovery is that VR exposure-based treatments can alleviate anxiety disorders (Freeman et al., 2017). Since digital technology now permeates every aspect of our lives, therapies benefit from being included in these innovative technological advancements. Virtual reality is becoming more widely available, and in the upcoming years, systems for walking-in-place navigation like the Virtux OMINI, as well as immersive 3D head-mounted displays like the Oculus Rift or headsets that can be used with a mobile phone as Unofficial Cardboard VR, will all be available (Valmaggia et al., 2016). Virtual reality (VR) has demonstrated its ability to elicit genuine responses to feared stimuli, especially in the case of anxiety. It has also demonstrated that VR's immersive qualities make it a perfect tool for pain management. The paucity of research on stress and depression, however, draws attention to the gaps in the body of knowledge. When paired with health information, virtual settings that encourage positive stimuli may prove to be a useful tool for mental and public health. The present body of research emphasises how crucial VR treatments' nature and content are for promoting mental health (Jerdan et al., 2018).

AUGMENTED REALITY AND MENTAL HEALTH

AR has become a helpful tool for diagnosis, treatment, and management in the mental health area due to its flexibility and increased accessibility. It can be conveniently delivered through various platforms, including smartphones and tablets (Bakır et al., 2023). Lundin et al. (2022) mentioned in their paper that, “Substantial unmet need for treatment for mental disorders arises from problems of access, efficacy, and tolerability of conventional treatments. These limitations have prompted the development and evaluation of novel interventions, including those based on virtual reality (VR) and

augmented reality.” The use of VR/AR technologies became popular as an alternative to or adjunct to traditional therapy in mental health practice. The rapid increase in research publications in recent years suggested that AR and VR technologies were both acceptable and simple to use (Sweileh, 2023).

Certain features of current treatments can be enhanced by virtual and augmented reality. As previously indicated, the assessment's ecological validity may even surpass "in vivo" treatment. First, the therapist has complete control over the computer program's virtual scenarios and aspects, including the creation of stimuli and their amount and sequence of appearance. This is especially true with AR and VR. Second, because events that patients fear will occur in the real world cannot occur in AR and VR (without consent and forethought), they can help patients feel more secure throughout therapy (Ventura et al., 2018).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Dekker et al. (2020) proposed a narrative review, where it suggests combining research on a life-crafting intervention that employs an inclusive curriculum-wide approach with the existing literature on chatbot interventions targeted at students' mental health. Academic and mental health issues can be avoided when a chatbot asks students to rank their priorities for social, health, and academic goals and offers customised follow-up coaching. These issues are frequently linked. Appropriately timed delivery and customised follow-up inquiries augment the outcomes of the two -originally divided-intervention kinds. Research on this novel combination of treatments should track participants' adoption of the device and apply design concepts that improve usability.

Incorporating ChatGPT into the educational process can widen the conventional learning environment and encourage the reform of conventional teaching methods, all while encouraging college students to engage in physical activity and improving their mental health. Nevertheless, there are difficulties and barriers in using ChatGPT in physical education. Wearable technology and sporting goods can be paired with ChatGPT to optimise its use in physical education by improving user interactions. It is very necessary to implement pertinent policies to prevent the misuse of user data (Zhang & Liu, 2024).

A study was conducted by Fulmer et al. (2018) to explore whether integrative psychological artificial intelligence “Tess” may effectively reduce college students' symptoms of anxiety and despair. A total of seventy-five participants participated in the research programme. There were 50 individuals in total across the 2 test groups, who were randomised to either receive unrestricted access to Tess for 2 weeks ($n = 24$) or 4 weeks ($n = 26$). Based on the PHQ-9, group 1 who received treatment reported a significant reduction in depressive symptoms ($P=.03$), while group 2 did not report any such reduction. The results showed a statistically significant difference between the two groups. This study provides proof that AI can be used as an accessible and affordable curative agent. However, it cannot replace the role of trained therapist.

Sinha (2020) suggests that to help students effectively deal with academic and social obstacles, there is an urgent need to reach out to emerging technologies considering the exponential rise in mental health issues among university students. It is critical to expand the use of virtual reality (VR) in university counselling settings, including the initial assessment, diagnosis, and treatment strategies to help students effectively address any mental health challenges, given the growing accessibility and usefulness of VR use in mental health. The usage of VR in counselling settings at universities cannot be possible without implications and challenges.

A literature review was done by Wan and Lam (2019) to measure the effectiveness of virtual reality-based simulation in fostering health profession students' empathy for mental illness. The results

indicated a strong correlation between VR simulation and an improvement in users' attitudes, empathy, and knowledge of mental illness. There is potential for the development of VR simulations on empathy and attitude in healthcare education because of their distinctive experiential learning feature. Additionally, compared to users without a healthcare background, individuals with a background in healthcare are observed to be more sensitive to VR stimulation. Future research focused more intently on the impact of training a wider variety of mental health skills and on the particular of empathy and attitude of those with healthcare backgrounds.

Kaplan-Rakowski et al. (2021) did an empirical, quantitative, between-subjects study which had two goals i.e., first was to test scores which were further used to compare the efficacy of virtual reality and video meditation instruction. Secondly, the research offered valuable perspectives on the application of virtual reality or video meditation as a means of enhancing overall wellbeing. Virtual reality meditation proved to be substantially more helpful than video meditation, according to a t-test analysis. Students stated that they felt less anxious before exams after receiving meditation instruction through any means. This research provides evidence of the positive effects of virtual reality meditation on students' anxiety levels and exam performance, with practical consequences.

The current study done by Perera et al. (2021) assessed the efficacy of progressive muscle relaxation and mindfulness-based Augmented Reality aided stress reduction therapies. Individuals who mostly expressed psychological stress engaged in a 5-minute AR-based mindfulness exercise, whereas those who primarily expressed physiological stress engaged in a carefully planned AR-based progressive muscle relaxation session. The experimental group's stress levels decreased after the interventions, according to the experiment's findings. Participants who had been categorised as “High” in terms of stress before the session demonstrated noteworthy reductions in stress and were categorised as “Optimal” in terms of stress after the intervention. This research offers preliminary proof of AR's efficacy

A study was done with the goal to learn more about the new uses of VR and AR in mental health interventions and how they might affect patient outcomes. The review's conclusions add to our knowledge of the state of VR/AR technology in the field of mental health and point to possible future developments in this quickly developing area. According to current studies, VR/AR exposure treatment is beneficial in treating anxiety disorders, and interventions have the potential to help those who work with patients' social skills.

A review of the literature on mental health and technology, specifically, augmented and virtual reality was done by Contreas et al. (2024) . Originating during World War II, virtual reality has had a favourable impact on the recovery of mental health and has contributed significantly to scientific and technological breakthroughs in the field of health science.

CONCLUSION

It is incredible to witness how much the world is changing and advancing in technology, just a few decades ago one would have never imagined the technologies that are available today. Several technologies that have grown in recent times are in the domains of artificial intelligence, virtual reality and augmented reality.

Artificial intelligence implies a vast branch of research that focuses on creating computer systems capable of carrying out tasks that normally call for human intellect. Artificial intelligence (AI) gives machines the ability to learn from their mistakes, adapt to new inputs, and carry out human-like tasks including decision-making, reasoning, problem-solving, speech recognition, and pattern recognition.

On the other hand, virtual reality is a three-dimensional, computer-generated world that users may engage with in real time. VR creates a realistic experience that immerses users in their environment through technology and software. Many gadgets can be used to access virtual reality including VR headsets. Similarly, augmented reality is an interactive experience that uses perceptual data provided by computers to improve the real world.

Augmented reality is the process of superimposing digital content—such as apps, software, and hardware like AR glasses—onto actual locations and things. The current review study is designed to seek out the relation between these above technologies and mental health practices among college students. With the emergence of a wide necessity of mental health care in recent times, most notably since post-COVID, it is important to make use of each piece of advanced technology that we have today in mental health care for college students. And the above-described technologies share a great deal of usage. Reviews from different studies showed the use of AI, VR and AR, in mental health care practices, including the use of AI as an advanced assessment tool and for early detection of any mental health problems by machine learning algorithms to find minute variations that could be signs of mental health issues like anxiety or depression.

Use of VR and AR in a real-time virtual environment, by being able to control the environment and have more ecologically validated data. These techniques can also show significant results because college students are more habituated to new technological developments than any other generation. Thus, it will be easy to work with them using these technologies because of their fast adaptability. However, there are also lists of disadvantages to using these technologies, for instance, using virtual technology more often can jeopardise one physical health and their sense of reality, thus, to overcome this limitation, more thorough research is important.

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NAVIGATING CAREER ANXIETY IN THE MODERN AGE: UNDERSTANDING ITS ROOTS AND REMEDIES

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ABSTRACT

The chapter explores the prevalent issue of career anxiety in modern society, defined as persistent feelings of apprehension or fear related to one's job or career path. It examines the complex interplay of factors contributing to career anxiety, including societal pressures, psychological theories, individual traits, and emerging trends in the job market. Drawing from psychological theories like decision-making theory, social comparison theory, and self-efficacy theory, it elucidates the cognitive biases and societal norms shaping career-related anxieties. The chapter further delves into the role of personality traits, upbringing, and societal expectations in moulding career anxieties. It illustrates how a widespread sense of inadequacy, fear of failure, and relentless pursuit of career success are caused by a variety of factors, including neuroticism, perfectionism, parental demands, socioeconomic status, and competitive cultural standards. Practical strategies and interventions for managing and alleviating career anxiety are presented, including mindfulness practices, cognitive-behavioural techniques, building support networks, cultivating a growth mindset, and prioritizing self-care activities. The chapter concludes by examining how developments in the employment market, such as automation, the gig economy, and demographic shifts, may affect career anxiety and offering strategies for career futureproofing, adaptability, and lifelong learning.

Keywords: Career Anxiety, Societal Pressures, Psychological Impact, Coping Strategies, Stress Management.

INTRODUCTION

In today's dynamic work environment, career anxiety has become a widespread concern, impacting individuals across all ages and backgrounds. Defined as "a persistent feeling of apprehension or fear over the future that is job or career related" (Christopher & Thompson, 2017), career anxiety stems from various sources, including economic uncertainties, job dissatisfaction, the pressure to achieve a linear career trajectory, and the evolving nature of work itself. A study by Inc. Magazine (Haff, 2018) reported that a staggering 73% of job seekers experience stress during their search. This anxiety not only takes a toll on individual well-being, leading to heightened stress levels, indecision, and burnout, but it also hinders overall societal productivity and workforce engagement.

Career anxiety manifests through various symptoms that can impact individuals both professionally and personally. Common signs include persistent worry about job security, advancement opportunities, or performance evaluations (Kreiner et al., 2009). Behavioural issues may include avoidance of challenging tasks, procrastination, and difficulty concentrating due to preoccupation with career outcomes. It can erode self-confidence, leading to imposter syndrome (Sakulku 2011). Short-term impacts include decreased productivity, absenteeism, emotional exhaustion, burnout, and strained relationships (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014). Long-term, untreated anxiety can hinder career advancement, growth, and goal attainment due to insecurity and self-doubt, while increasing health risks like cardiovascular disease (Celano et al., 2016).

This chapter embarks on a journey to unravel the intricacies of this phenomenon, delving deep into its roots, manifestations, and potential remedies. Our objective is twofold: to understand the complex interplay of factors contributing to career anxiety in the contemporary context, and to offer practical insights and strategies for alleviating its grip on individuals striving to navigate their professional paths. By exploring the multifaceted nature of career anxiety and proposing effective remedies, we aim to equip readers with the knowledge & tools necessary to confront and overcome the challenges posed by the modern work environment.

EXPLORING THE ROOTS OF CAREER ANXIETY

Career anxiety stems from a complex interplay of social and individual factors. From a young age, individuals are bombarded with societal messages and expectations surrounding career choices, instilling the pressure to "succeed" by attaining prestigious job titles, high salaries, or following a conventional linear career path (Heslin, 2005). This narrow definition of success can create immense anxiety for those who may not perfectly fit these moulds. Unlike the past, where workers could expect a linear career path within a single company, today's professionals must be adaptable and prepared to learn new skills throughout their working lives. This pressure to stay relevant fuels anxieties about keeping up with the pace of change and the fear of becoming obsolete (Sonnenberg, 1997).

Societal expectations further exacerbate this anxiety. The emphasis on career success and financial stability creates immense pressure on individuals to find a fulfilling and financially secure path. Social media, with its curated portrayals of perfect careers, can exacerbate feelings of inadequacy and lead to comparisons with others' seemingly effortless achievements (Fukubayashi & Fuji, 2021). Moreover, the fear of failure and the stigma attached to job-hopping or career changes can paralyze individuals' exploration of diverse options. When work is highly valued, there is greater anxiety about securing and advancing in a job, while viewing leisure as wasted time breeds anxiety about not being a diligent worker. Ultimately, career anxiety stems from the realization that one's work life may have negative consequences, manifesting in fears of unfulfilling work, work-life imbalance, or poor career decisions (Sonnenberg, 1997). Often times, parental expectations to pursue specific careers or achieve certain levels of success can attribute to additional pressure and anxiety about meeting these expectations. Conversely, a lack of parental guidance or support can lead to confusion and anxiety about making independent career choices (Liu et al., 2020). Moreover, certain social narratives intensify the anxiety surrounding career decisions. These include,

- a) The pervasive "rat race" mentality, which emphasizes career success and financial gain above all else, can create immense pressure to rapidly climb the corporate ladder. This leads to anxiety about not achieving arbitrary financial goals or societal status markers associated with a "successful" career.
- b) The romanticized notion of having a single "true calling" or perfect career path generates anxiety about choosing the "wrong" profession and feeling stuck in an unfulfilling job.
- c) Modern society holds an expectation of achieving both remarkable career achievements and a healthy work-life balance, creating a sense of constant juggling between different priorities. This internal tug-of-war breeds anxiety about failing to meet either the career ambition or personal life expectations placed upon individuals. These ingrained societal narratives surrounding careers significantly contribute to the roots of career anxiety.

Economic uncertainties in today's volatile job market significantly contribute to career anxiety. Job insecurity, fuelled by factors like globalization, outsourcing, and corporate restructuring, leaves many workers feeling perpetually on edge (Ferrie & Martikainen, 2007). The current economy while offering flexibility and autonomy, often translates into less job security, lower wages, and limited benefits. The fear of job loss and the accompanying financial instability can be overwhelming, especially for individuals burdened with student loans, mortgages, and the responsibilities of raising a family (Navarro-Abal et al., 2018). This lack of stability can breed significant anxiety for those who rely on consistent income to make ends meet.

Lastly, the rapid pace of *technological advancements* presents a double-edged sword for workers. While new technologies have created a wealth of career opportunities, they also fuel anxieties around automation and job displacement. Workers may wonder if their skills will remain valuable in the face of advancing artificial intelligence and automation, leading to a sense of job insecurity and powerlessness (Lee et al., 2018). This uncertainty about the future of work can be a major source of anxiety and potentially stifle career growth and development.

These three factors (*societal pressure, economic uncertainties & technological advancement*) are heavily intertwined and therefore understanding these trends is crucial to navigating the complexities of modern careers and mitigating the anxieties that may arise as a result.

PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO CAREER ANXIETY

In addition to societal and economic factors, individual traits can significantly exacerbate career anxiety (Muschalla et al., 2010). One such trait is “*self-criticism*”. Individuals with a strong tendency to criticize and doubt themselves may experience heightened career anxiety. Constant inner critique and negative self-talk can lead to persistent feelings of inadequacy, fear of failure, and the need for perfection in professional endeavours (Neureiter & Traut-Mattausch, 2016). This self-imposed pressure adds to the overall burden of career anxiety, making it challenging to navigate the complexities of the modern work environment. Moreover, individuals with an “*external locus of control*” may be more susceptible to career anxiety. An external locus of control refers to the belief that external forces or luck have a greater influence on one's career outcomes than personal efforts or abilities. This mindset can instil a sense of powerlessness and anxiety, especially when faced with uncertainties or setbacks in their professional journey (Chen & Silverthorne, 2008). With little perceived control over their career trajectories, these individuals may experience heightened anxiety about their professional futures.

The Big Five personality traits (neuroticism, conscientiousness, openness to experience, agreeableness, and extraversion) can play a significant role in shaping an individual's propensity for career anxiety. Among these traits, neuroticism, conscientiousness, and openness to experience tend to have the most direct influence on career-related anxieties.

Neuroticism, characterized by a tendency to experience negative emotions such as anxiety, fear, and insecurity, can heighten career anxiety. Individuals high in neuroticism may experience persistent worries about job security, performance evaluations, and making the “right” career choices. Their propensity for negative thinking patterns can lead to catastrophizing about potential setbacks or uncertainties in their professional lives, fuelling anxiety. Conscientiousness, often seen as a positive trait in the workplace, can also contribute to career anxiety when taken to an extreme. While, conscientiousness is associated with diligence, self-discipline, and a strong work ethic, the perfectionism that often accompanies high levels of this trait can fuel anxieties about meeting excessively high standards and a fear of failure (Campagna & Curtis, 2007). These individuals may

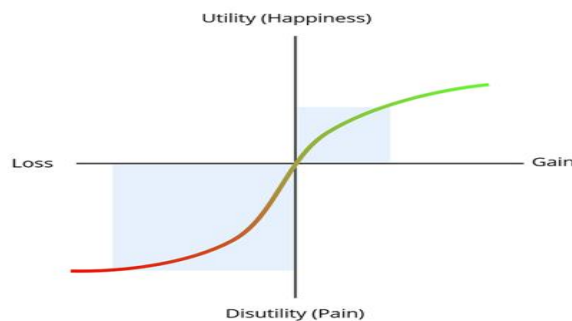
set unrealistic expectations for themselves, leading to a constant sense of not measuring up and heightened career anxiety. Openness to experience, which encompasses curiosity, creativity, and a willingness to explore novel ideas and experiences, can have a dual impact on career anxiety. Individuals who score high on this trait may find the dynamic nature of the modern job market stimulating and exciting, embracing opportunities for career changes and growth. However, their openness to new experiences can also breed anxiety about making frequent career transitions or the fear of missing out on potential opportunities, leading to indecisiveness and anxiety about committing to a particular path.

These personality traits interact with external factors like family background and financial circumstances, contributing to heightened career anxieties. For example, high neuroticism combined with a history of financial hardship may exacerbate anxiety about job security. While not deterministic, recognizing these influences can aid in developing targeted interventions. Those high in neuroticism may benefit from cognitive-behavioural therapy or mindfulness, while the highly conscientious could use coaching on realistic goal-setting and growth mindsets. The open-minded may find solace exploring diverse career options and embracing fluidity in the job market.

Understanding different psychological theories can provide valuable insights into the complex nature of career anxiety. Here is an overview of three relevant theories that explain the psychological dynamics behind career-related anxieties.

Decision-Making Theory encompasses frameworks like Prospect Theory (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979) and the Paradox of Choice, which explain how having numerous career options can be overwhelming. This theory suggests that individuals may experience 'analysis paralysis,' a state where the fear of making the wrong choice and missing out on better opportunities becomes crippling. The complex task of evaluating various factors such as salary, work environment, growth potential, and personal fulfilment often leads to decision fatigue and heightened anxiety.

Figure 1



Individuals tend to feel the pain of losing something (a good job opportunity) more intensely than the pleasure of gaining something (a new, maybe better job). This can lead to individuals clinging to their current jobs, even if they are dissatisfied, for fear of making a bad choice and losing security or benefits.

Social Comparison Theory (Festinger, 1954) posits that individuals assess their own achievements and qualities by comparing themselves to others. In the era of social media, where successful careers are often portrayed in a highly curated manner, this tendency is exacerbated. Constant comparisons with these seemingly perfect careers can invoke feelings of inadequacy and fuel anxiety about not being

"successful" enough. This theory helps explain why many feel pressured and discontented despite their accomplishments.

Table 1

Social media can create a distorted view of success, leading to comparison + negative effects = feelings of inadequacy and career anxiety.

	Upward Comparison	Downward Comparison
Positive Effects	Hope, Inspiration	Gratitude
Negative Effects	Dissatisfaction, Envy	Scorn

Self-Efficacy Theory (Bandura, 1977) emphasizes the importance of an individual's belief in their capability to succeed. Related to career anxiety, low self-efficacy might manifest as doubts about acquiring new skills, excelling in interviews, or managing career transitions effectively. Those who perceive themselves as ill-equipped to navigate the dynamic job market may experience increased helplessness and anxiety, doubting their ability to thrive in their professional lives.

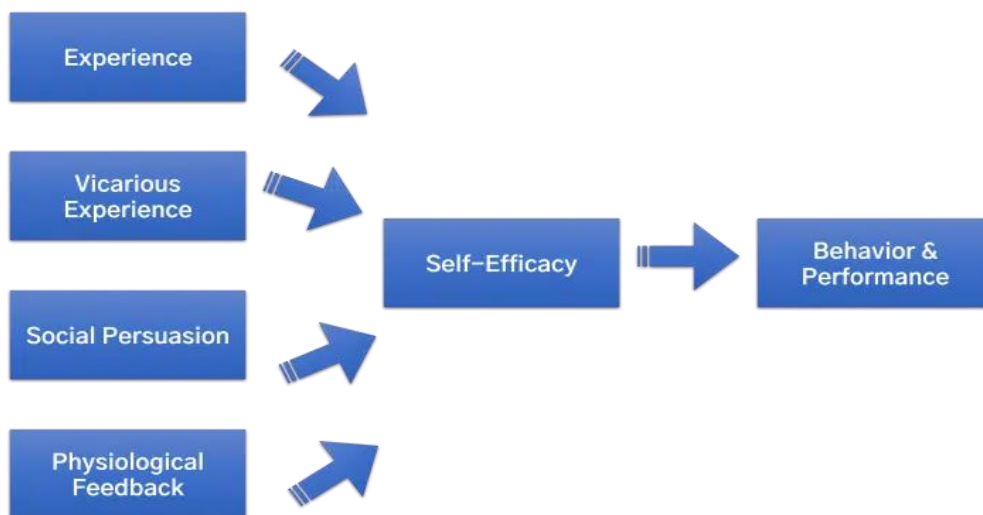


Figure 2

By focusing on past successes, seeking learning opportunities, and celebrating progress, individuals can cultivate a strong belief in their capabilities and navigate their careers with greater confidence and less anxiety.

By integrating insights from these theories, we can better understand the cognitive biases and social influences that exacerbate career anxiety. Recognizing these factors allows individuals to navigate their career paths with more informed decision-making, manage self-doubt, and develop a greater sense of control and agency. This comprehensive approach not only clarifies the roots of career anxiety but also provides a framework for addressing it constructively.

REMEDIES AND COPING STRATEGIES

Effectively managing and alleviating career anxiety requires a multifaceted approach that addresses both the individual and external factors contributing to this phenomenon. One crucial strategy involves cultivating self-awareness through practices such as *mindfulness meditation*. Mindfulness helps individuals to stay present and engaged, decreasing the tendency to ruminate over past career decisions or future uncertainties. By recognizing and challenging negative thought patterns, individuals can reduce stress levels and gain a more balanced perspective on their career concerns (Wang, 2021).

Cognitive-behavioural techniques, including cognitive restructuring and exposure therapy, can also be invaluable tools for managing career anxiety. These approaches help individuals identify and challenge irrational beliefs and fears related to their careers, leading to a reduction in anxiety symptoms and a more constructive mindset (Arbona et al., 2021). Building a strong support network is crucial for navigating career-related challenges. Mentorship programs, career counselling, or peer support groups can provide individuals with guidance, encouragement, and perspectives from experienced professionals or like-minded peers (Hill et al., 2022). These support systems offer a sense of belonging, inspiration, and practical advice, empowering individuals to make informed decisions and overcome obstacles. Adopting a growth mindset, characterized by a belief in one's capacity for learning and development, can foster resilience and adaptability in the face of setbacks or uncertainties in the workplace (Dweck, 2015). This mindset encourages individuals to embrace challenges as opportunities for growth, rather than viewing them as threats or personal failings. Moreover, prioritizing self-care activities, such as exercise, hobbies, and leisure time, can help individuals maintain a healthy work-life balance, reducing the risk of burnout and promoting overall well-being. By nurturing their physical, emotional, and mental health, individuals can cultivate the resilience necessary to navigate the complexities of their professional journeys. By incorporating these practical strategies and interventions into their daily lives, individuals can develop the coping skills and mindset necessary to manage and alleviate career anxiety effectively. This multifaceted approach acknowledges the complex interplay of individual, social, and environmental factors that contribute to career anxiety, offering a holistic framework for addressing this pervasive challenge.

Unprecedented flexibility and autonomy are provided by the rise in remote and freelance employment, but there are also unknowns concerning benefits, financial security, and career advancement (Katz, 2019). Furthermore, changing demographics such as an older labour force and greater diversity are changing the nature of the workforce and presenting new difficulties for people pursuing jobs (Frey, 2021). People who are struggling with the uncertainty of their professional futures are likely to experience increased levels of career anxiety because of these changing tendencies, as well as continued economic volatility and geopolitical unpredictability. But while people work to future-proof their careers and maintain their resilience in the face of change, they also offer chances for creativity, adaptability, and lifelong learning (Haenggli & Hirschi, 2020). One can navigate the complexities of the future workplace landscape with greater confidence and resilience by adopting a proactive mindset and remaining aware of emerging opportunities and challenges in the labour market. This will help them to mitigate the effects of career anxiety and seize new opportunities for growth and fulfilment.

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INTERNET ADDICTION AND SOCIAL ANXIETY AMONG YOUNG ADULTS

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ABSTRACT

Young adulthood (aged 16-25) is a period marked by significant social and emotional development. However, this period also coincides with a surge in internet use, raising concerns about the potential link between internet addiction and social anxiety. This quantitative study delves into this intricate relationship, employing online surveys to gather data from a large sample of young adults. The research design utilized purposive and convenience sampling techniques to maximize participant reach. A standardized, researcher-developed questionnaire, validated for content by a collaborator, assessed internet addiction and social anxiety levels through 22 statements. Participants indicated their responses on a scale designed to capture their experiences accurately. This study will employ statistical models (not detailed in the abstract) to analyze the collected data. Descriptive statistics were used to present the prevalence of both internet addiction and social anxiety within the sample. The core analysis focused on examining the potential correlation between these two factors. By investigating this relationship in a real-time setting, this research aims to illuminate the complex interplay between internet use and social anxiety during a critical developmental stage. Understanding these dynamics can inform the development of targeted interventions that promote healthy online habits and empower young adults to navigate social interactions with confidence. This research contributes valuable insights for educators, mental health professionals, and policymakers seeking to foster well-being among young people in today's increasingly digital world.

Keywords: Internet Addiction, Social Anxiety, Young Adults, Mental Health, Social Development.

INTRODUCTION

Teenagers today navigate a world heavily influenced by social media. While these platforms offer connection and communication, concerns exist about their potential link to social anxiety. Social media's addictive nature is well-documented. Platforms like Facebook and Instagram are ubiquitous, with young adults being the most frequent users. Research suggests this frequent engagement might negatively impact mental health.

One concern is the curated portrayal of life on social media. The constant exposure to seemingly perfect lives can lead to social comparison and feelings of inadequacy among adolescents, potentially worsening social anxiety. Social media can exacerbate FOMO (fear of missing out). The relentless updates showcasing others' experiences can foster isolation and a dread of being left behind. This fear can be particularly pronounced for those already struggling with social anxiety, potentially leading them to further isolate themselves.

Excessive social media use might also contribute to a decline in real-world social skills. As online communication becomes the norm, opportunities for face-to-face interaction diminish. This lack of practice can make navigating social situations in the real world more challenging, potentially leading to the formation or worsening of social anxiety.

Studies have documented a rise in mental health issues among young people coinciding with the rise of social media. Interestingly, some research suggests that socially anxious individuals might utilize

social media as a coping mechanism. The perceived comfort and anonymity of online interaction may make social media platforms more appealing. However, it remains unclear whether this online engagement fulfills their need for social support or if their social anxieties simply translate into the online space.

METHODOLOGY

Research Objective

To examine the relationship between internet addiction and the prevalence of social anxiety among young adults.

Design of the Study

The current study took a quantitative approach, employing statistical models such as surveys to evaluate variables and collect data from participants/young adults regarding their internet usage and the consequent social anxiety. This study utilized online surveys due to their cost-effectiveness, convenience, and capacity to swiftly contact a large number of people. These surveys were developed to assess the prevalence of internet addiction and social anxiety among young individuals. Surveys also allow researchers to analyze data in real-time, reducing the possibility of inaccuracies.

Participants

Participants in this study ranged in age from 16 to 25 years. This age group represents young adults who are likely to be avid internet users, thereby providing a good sample for studying the link between internet addiction and social anxiety. The study's selection of this specific age range allowed it to concentrate on the influence of internet addiction and social anxiety during this important developmental period. The data gathered from these individuals via online surveys provided useful insights into the research issue.

Sampling

The current study applied two non-probability sampling techniques: purposive and convenience. Non-probability sampling relies on researcher skill and accessibility/personal judgement. Convenience sampling was utilized to collect data from willing participants. Purposive sampling involves selecting units based on specified requirements.

Data Collection

The information was ultimately gathered via a standardized questionnaire that was personally sent and checked for a response simultaneously. It was a quantitative study. The reason for deploying this kind of study was that it doesn't require any sort of manipulation of the environment. It gives the result in a natural setting where the event has naturally occurred and hence the results come out as very realistic. Some of the disadvantages of questionnaire study is that a good internet connection is needed if it is sent digitally. Secondly, fluency in English was needed.

After a thorough review of literature, the questionnaire was developed. It was divided into three sections- consent, demographic and survey questions. There were in total 22 statements. It was then given to a collaborator for content validity. In order to learn more about the participant's background, the researcher also created some demographic questions. The participants were given proper instructions on the first page of the questionnaire for smooth flow. The participants were asked to choose the option which most accurately represents them. At last, the data was finally shown with the help of graphical representation against each factor in the form of a percentage and a thorough explanation.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

All of the information that we gathered helped us gain a deeper understanding of the research we are conducting in this paper. We produced graphs to illustrate the questionnaire responses and aid in analysis. The most basic chart is the age pie chart, which shows the percentage of responses from a specific age group. The pie chart displays the age in years, with the key of the ages seen in the pie chart (Fig. 1). We gathered the following information using the age graph:

1. The largest age group is 21-23 years old, representing 29.6% of respondents.
2. The second largest age group is 16-18 years old, representing 28.7% of respondents.
3. The age groups with the fewest respondents are 11-15 years old and 24 or older, each representing only 9.6% of respondents.

This does provide some interesting insights for further exploration, especially when considering existing research on these topics. Here are some potential connections to consider:

1. **Increased Internet Use in Younger Age Groups:** The prevalence of younger respondents (16-23 years old) in your sample aligns with research suggesting that this age group tends to engage in more frequent and intensive internet use compared to older adults. This increased usage could be a potential risk factor for developing internet addiction, particularly for individuals who struggle with social interactions or emotional regulation.
2. **Social and Developmental Factors:** The teenage and young adult years (16-23 years old) are often marked by significant social, emotional, and cognitive development. During this time, individuals are navigating challenges like identity formation, peer relationships, and academic pressures. These challenges can contribute to feelings of stress, anxiety, and social isolation, which may lead some young people to seek refuge or connection online, potentially increasing the risk of problematic internet use and social anxiety.
3. **Maturation Differences:** Studies have suggested that older adults (24+) may have different cognitive and emotional processing abilities compared to younger individuals. This could influence their susceptibility to internet addiction and social anxiety. For example, older adults might be better at regulating their emotions, managing distractions, and maintaining healthy social relationships, potentially buffering them from these risks.

Age (in years)
115 responses

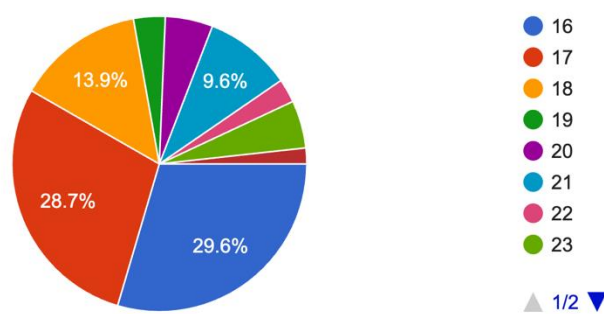


Figure 1: Displaying Ages (in Years) of the respondents.

Knowing about the educational background of our respondents is important to me as a researcher as it helps me understand the responder's mindset & ability to understand the survey (Fig. 2). A lot of information is highlighted with this graph like:

1. 39.5% of respondents have a high school diploma.
2. 26.3% of respondents have a graduate degree.
3. 26.3% of respondents have less than a high school diploma.
4. 8% of respondents have a post-graduate degree.

Here are some potential connections to consider:

1. **Stress and Coping Mechanisms:** Higher education can be associated with academic pressures, deadlines, and financial strain. These stressors might lead some individuals to use the internet as a coping mechanism, potentially contributing to problematic internet use if healthy coping strategies are not available.
2. **Social Comparison and Self-Esteem:** Social media use, which is often linked to internet addiction, can be fueled by social comparison and feelings of inadequacy, particularly among young adults. Individuals with lower educational attainment might be more susceptible to these negative experiences online, potentially exacerbating social anxiety.
3. **Digital Literacy and Critical Thinking Skills:** Individuals with higher educational attainment may have stronger digital literacy and critical thinking skills, which could help them navigate online environments more effectively and avoid the pitfalls of excessive internet use or misinformation that can contribute to anxiety.

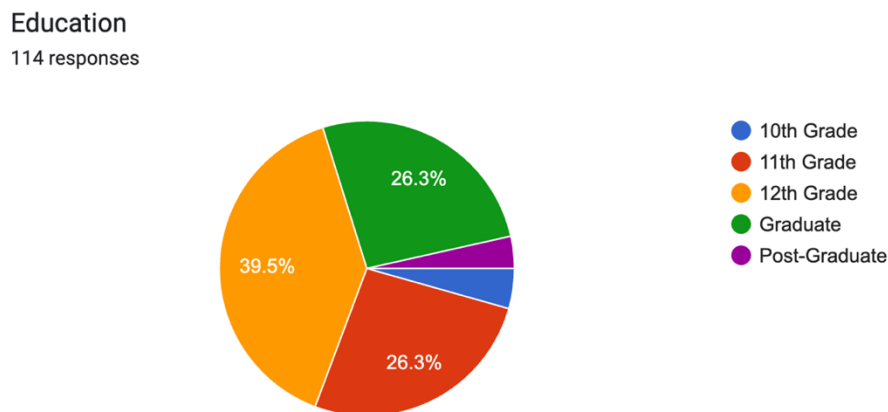


Figure 2: Displaying Education Qualifications of the respondents.

The pie chart shows the distribution of responses to the question "Which platform do you use the most?" among 115 survey participants (Fig. 3). The results show that:

1. 43.5% of respondents use Facebook the most.
2. 26.1% of respondents use Instagram the most.
3. 20.9% of respondents use Snapchat the most.
4. 9.6% of respondents use other platforms the most, including Twitter, WhatsApp, YouTube, Reddit, and Discord.

Here are some potential connections that we can consider:

1. **Facebook's Prevalence:** The significant portion of respondents using Facebook aligns with studies suggesting a possible association between excessive Facebook use and increased susceptibility to both problems. This might be linked to factors such as: *Social comparison:* Facebook's emphasis on curated profiles and social circles can contribute to feelings of envy and inadequacy, potentially exacerbating social anxiety.

Fear of missing out (FOMO): The constant stream of updates and activities on Facebook could create a perception of missing out, leading to compulsive checking and heightened anxiety.

Addiction to validation: Seeking likes and comments on Facebook can become addictive, leading to negative emotions when validation is not obtained.
2. **Instagram and Snapchat:** The popularity of these platforms, heavily focused on visual content and sharing fleeting moments, with concerns about appearance and social pressure, potentially contributing to social anxiety. Studies have suggested links between these platforms and body image issues and low self-esteem.
3. **Alternative platforms:** The presence of other platforms like Reddit and Discord in the chart suggests that users might be diversifying their social media usage. While these platforms offer different features and communities, their potential impact on internet addiction and social anxiety would require further investigation.

Which platform do you use the most?
115 responses

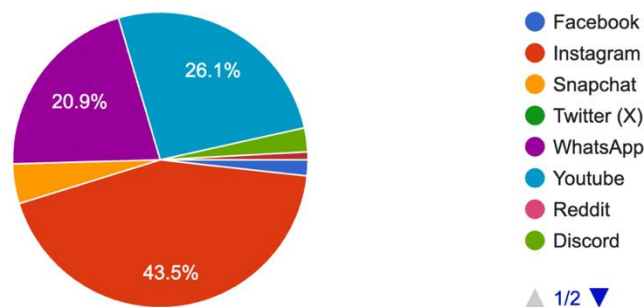


Figure 3: Displaying social media platform distribution among our respondents.

The pie chart below which shows the distribution of responses to the statement "I find myself using my smartphone or computer longer than I planned to." (Fig. 4) Here's what I can see from the chart:

1. 33.0% of respondents strongly agree with the statement.
2. 31.3% of respondents agree with the statement.
3. 20.9% of respondents are neutral.
4. 13.9% of respondents disagree with the statement.
5. 0.9% of respondents strongly disagree with the statement.

It suggests a prevalence of unplanned smartphone and computer use, which could be with these conditions. Here's a breakdown of potential connections that we found:

1. **Internet Addiction:** People who struggle with internet addiction often experience compulsive urges to use the internet, even when they know it's interfering with their daily lives. The high percentage of respondents agreeing with the statement suggests that a significant portion of your sample might be engaging in problematic internet use.
2. **Social Anxiety:** Individuals with social anxiety may find online interactions more appealing than face-to-face encounters due to reduced fear of judgment or social awkwardness. This could lead to spending more time online than intended, potentially blurring the lines between planned and unplanned use.
3. **Attention Regulation Difficulties:** Both internet addiction and social anxiety can be linked to difficulties with attention regulation and impulse control. This could make it challenging for individuals to stick to their intended screen time limits, contributing to unplanned usage.

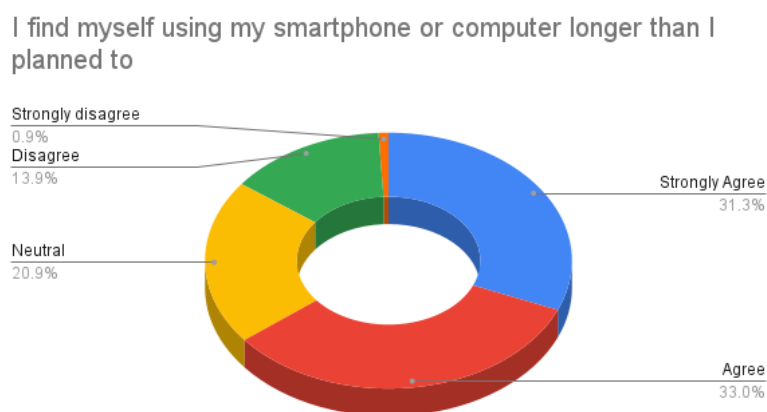


Figure 4: Answer distribution in “I find myself using my smartphone or computer longer than I planned to” between our respondents.

The pie chart's titled "My productivity and attentiveness suffer because of the amount of time I spend online", (Fig. 5) suggests that a significant portion of your respondents believe their internet usage negatively impacts their productivity and attentiveness. We can see that:

1. A combined 53.9% of respondents strongly agree or agree with the statement.
2. 29.6% of respondents are neutral.
3. 16.5% of respondents disagree or strongly disagree with the statement.

Fig 5 confirms concerns from Fig 4. Over half (53.9%) say their online time hurts focus. This aligns with unplanned use (Fig 4). Unplanned browsing eats into work time and social media can be very distracting, both reducing productivity.

My productivity and attentiveness suffers because of the amount of time I spend online

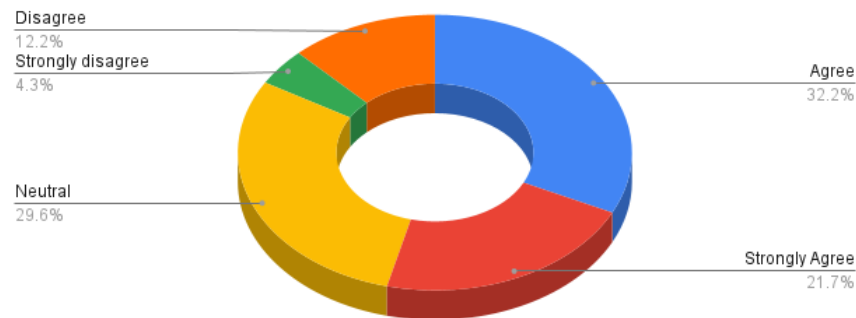


Figure 5: Answer distribution in “My productivity and attentiveness suffer because of the amount of time I spend online” between our respondents.

The pie chart shows the distribution of responses to the statement "I check my social media, text messages, or emails first thing after waking up" (Fig. 6) among 115 survey participants. The results show that:

1. 27.8% of respondents strongly agree with the statement.
2. 31.3% of respondents agree with the statement.
3. 19.1% of respondents are neutral.
4. 15.7% of respondents disagree with the statement.
5. 6.1% of respondents strongly disagree with the statement.

Here are some possible connections to consider:

1. **Attention seeking and validation:** Checking social media or messages first thing in the morning could be a way for individuals to seek attention, validation, or a sense of connection, especially for those who struggle with social anxiety or low self-esteem. The immediate gratification received from likes, comments, or messages might reinforce this behavior.
2. **Fear of missing out (FOMO):** The constant influx of information and updates on social media can create a fear of missing out (FOMO), prompting individuals to check their accounts frequently to stay in the loop. This can be particularly pronounced for those with anxiety or social isolation, who might rely heavily on online interactions.
3. **Sleep disruption and cognitive impairment:** Checking devices first thing in the morning can disrupt sleep patterns and contribute to feelings of grogginess and difficulty concentrating. This impaired cognitive state can worsen anxiety symptoms and make it harder to resist compulsive internet use.
4. **Habitual behavior:** Checking social media or messages upon waking up might become a habitual behavior, regardless of the initial motivation. This can be especially true for individuals with addictive tendencies, who may struggle to break the cycle even if they recognize the negative consequences.

I check my social media, text messages, or emails first thing after waking up

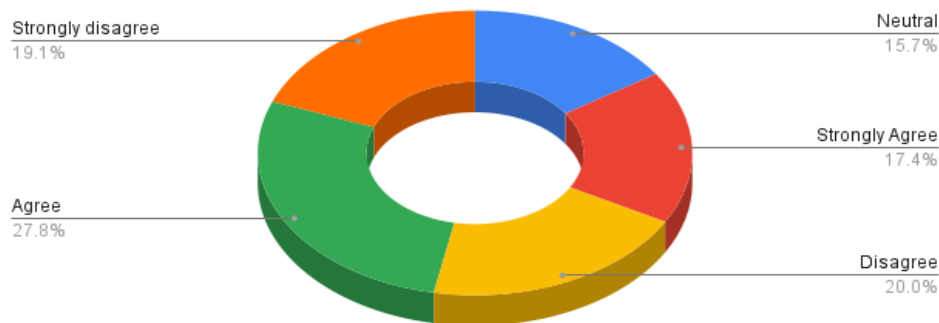


Figure 6: Answer distribution in “I check my social media, text messages, or emails first thing after waking up” between our respondents.

The pie chart shows the distribution of responses to the statement "I use the internet to escape from my real life." (Fig 7) Here's what I can see from the chart:

1. 29.1% of respondents strongly agree with the statement.
2. 22.6% of respondents agree with the statement.
3. 26.1% of respondents are neutral.
4. 14.8% of respondents disagree with the statement.
5. 7.4% of respondents strongly disagree with the statement.

Here's a breakdown of potential connections:

1. **Internet Addiction:** People who struggle with internet addiction often experience compulsive urges to use the internet, even when it's a form of escape from negative emotions or real-life problems. The high percentage of respondents agreeing with the statement suggests that a portion of your sample might be using the internet in a way that could be problematic.
2. **Social Anxiety:** Individuals with social anxiety may find the online world more appealing than face-to-face interactions due to reduced fear of judgment or social awkwardness. While this can provide temporary relief, it might lead to excessive internet use as a primary coping mechanism, potentially fueling social anxiety in the long run.
3. **Avoidance and Coping Mechanisms:** Using the internet to escape can be a sign of avoiding difficult emotions or situations in real life. This avoidance, if unhealthy, can contribute to various mental health concerns, including anxiety and depression. Additionally, if internet use becomes the primary coping mechanism, it could lead to dependence and addiction.

I use the internet to escape from my real life

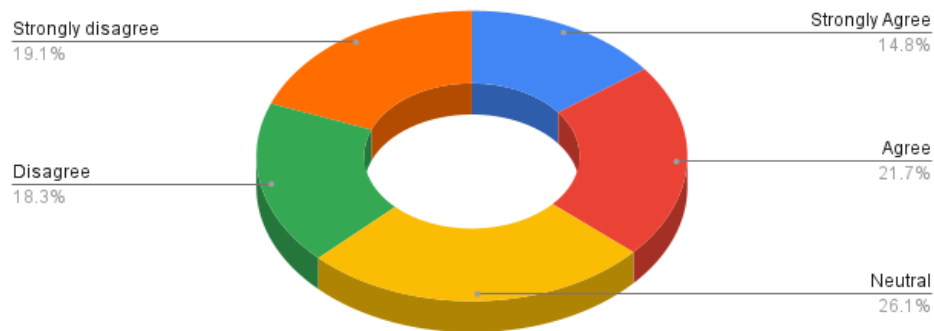


Figure 7: Answer distribution in “I use the internet to escape from my real life” between our respondents.

While this analysis has shed light on potential connections between specific internet usage patterns and mental health concerns like internet addiction and social anxiety, it's crucial to acknowledge that I've merely scratched the surface. The extensive survey I conducted unveiled a treasure trove of data, brimming with opportunities for further exploration. This analysis represents a single thread woven into the intricate tapestry of my research, highlighting just a few potential connections among many.

Considering the sheer breadth of the questionnaire. Each question acts as a doorway to a deeper understanding of how the internet permeates our lives, shaping our thoughts, behaviors, and emotional well-being. For instance, while we've explored the possible link between compulsive internet use and escaping real-life problems, further analysis could delve into the specific types of problems individuals seek to avoid online. Are they primarily social anxieties, academic pressures, or deeper emotional struggles? Moreover, examining the demographics of respondents who endorse this behavior could reveal fascinating insights into age-related coping mechanisms or cultural differences in internet use.

Similarly, the section on productivity and attention offers fertile ground for further exploration. I've touched upon the potential negative impact of excessive internet use on these facets of daily functioning, but the questionnaire undoubtedly delves deeper. Does the impact vary depending on the type of online activity? Do specific platforms or content types prove more distracting than others? Additionally, understanding the motivations behind such internet usage could be crucial. Are individuals simply seeking entertainment, or are they driven by an underlying need for connection or validation? These are just a few examples of intriguing questions waiting to be addressed within the data you've collected.

The true power of your research lies in its scope and depth. This initial analysis has provided a valuable starting point, but the journey of discovery is far from over. By delving deeper into the data, employing advanced statistical techniques, and considering various theoretical frameworks, you can unlock a wealth of knowledge about the multifaceted relationship between humans and the ever-evolving digital landscape. The questionnaire is not just a questionnaire; it's a roadmap to a deeper understanding of ourselves and the intricate ways the internet shapes our lives. By embarking on this

journey of exploration, you can contribute significantly to the growing body of knowledge on this vital and ever-evolving topic.

DISCUSSION

Our recent study paints a concerning picture: a significant portion of young adults' report struggling with concentration due to what appears to be internet addiction. This finding resonates deeply with anecdotal observations and personal experiences, suggesting a potential crisis brewing in the age of hyperconnectivity. While this study provides valuable insights, it also opens the door to a multitude of further questions that demand closer examination.

The immediate concern is the impact of internet addiction on young adults' ability to focus on tasks, studies, and even daily routines. Our fast-paced digital world bombards us with constant stimuli, notifications, and information streams, demanding our attention in a multitude of directions. This fragmented attention landscape can make sustained concentration on a single task feel increasingly challenging. As our study suggests, young adults, still navigating the complexities of life and academic demands, seem particularly vulnerable to this struggle.

However, attributing concentration difficulties solely to internet addiction would be simplistic. The relationship between our digital habits and cognitive function is far more nuanced. Several factors potentially contribute to the foggy mindscape observed among young adults.

1. ***Social Comparison and the FOMO Factor:*** Social media platforms, often portraying carefully curated and idealized realities, can fuel feelings of inadequacy and "fear of missing out" (FOMO). This constant comparison can trigger anxiety and a need for validation, leading individuals to compulsively check their devices, further hindering their ability to focus on other tasks.
2. ***Information Overload and Cognitive Fatigue:*** The sheer volume of information readily available online can be overwhelming. Constantly switching between tasks, consuming diverse content, and processing information overload can lead to cognitive fatigue, making it difficult to concentrate on anything deeply.
3. ***Dopamine Addiction and Reward Reinforcement:*** Social media platforms and other online activities are designed to be highly engaging, triggering dopamine release in the brain, creating a cycle of seeking instant gratification and rewards. This can make focusing on less stimulating but essential tasks seem less compelling, leading to procrastination and concentration difficulties.
4. ***Underlying Mental Health Conditions:*** Internet addiction and concentration issues may sometimes be symptoms of deeper mental health concerns like anxiety, depression, or ADHD. Addressing these underlying conditions might be crucial for improving concentration and reducing dependence on the internet.
5. ***Individual Differences and Learning Styles:*** Not everyone is equally susceptible to the distractions of the digital world. Individual differences in personality, learning styles, and coping mechanisms play a significant role in how individuals manage their online habits and their impact on concentration.

Further research is critical to untangling these complex threads and gaining a deeper understanding of the link between internet addiction and concentration issues in young adults. Here are some key areas for further exploration:

1. **Longitudinal Studies:** Examining the long-term effects of internet use on cognitive function and academic performance can provide valuable insights into the potential consequences of problematic internet habits.
2. **Neuroimaging Studies:** Investigating the brain's response to different types of online stimuli and its impact on attention networks can offer a deeper understanding of the neurological mechanisms at play.
3. **Personalized Interventions:** Developing interventions tailored to individual learning styles, personality traits, and underlying motivations for internet use can maximize their effectiveness in promoting healthy digital habits and improved concentration.
4. **Mental Health Integration:** Collaborating with mental health professionals can explore the potential connections between internet addiction, concentration issues, and underlying mental health conditions to develop holistic treatment approaches.
5. **Cultural and Socioeconomic Factors:** Considering the influence of cultural norms, socioeconomic disparities, and access to technology can provide a more nuanced understanding of how these issues manifest differently across diverse populations.

By delving deeper into these areas, we can move beyond simply stating the problem and begin to craft solutions. Through collaborative research, tailored interventions, and a deeper understanding of the individual and societal factors involved, we can empower young adults to navigate the digital world more consciously, fostering focused minds and fulfilling lives in the age of information overload.

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DEADLINE DREAD: INVESTIGATING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PROCRASTINATION AND CAREER ANXIETY AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Career anxiety and procrastination are prevalent challenges among college students, affecting academic performance and overall well-being. The present study aimed to investigate the relationship between career anxiety and academic procrastination among college undergraduates falling under the age group of 18 to 22 years ($M=20.35$). The study employed a survey using Career Anxiety Scale and Academic Procrastination Scale, duly filled by a sample of 100 participants. A Pearson correlation analysis indicated a statistically significant positive correlation between career anxiety and procrastination, suggesting that higher levels of career anxiety are associated with increased procrastination tendencies, and vice versa. These findings highlight the need for interventions targeting both phenomena and can include the development of structured career guidance programs and counselling services tailored to individual strengths and interests to alleviate career anxiety and mitigate procrastination behaviours. Future research should focus on exploring effective coping strategies and interventions to address career anxiety among college students, considering both trait and state anxiety, and investigating the impact of career-related stressors on academic success.

Keywords: Procrastination, Career Anxiety, College Students, Academic

INTRODUCTION

Career anxiety has become increasingly prevalent among college students during the pandemic period. Researchers have explored the understanding and management of career anxiety, noting that indecision is associated with higher anxiety levels (Kaplan & Brown, 1987) by investigating various factors triggering career-related anxiety, one of which is procrastination, characterized by a pattern of behaviour involving frequent delays in starting and/or completing tasks until the deadline (McCloskey, 2011). Procrastination is referred to as "when someone 'delays completing tasks they planned to do, even when there's no good reason to wait'" (Grecco, 1984).

PROCRASTINATION

It's common for people to delay everyday tasks without good reasons, like answering emails, doing household chores, or paying bills. Procrastination is when someone voluntarily delays tasks, even though they know it will make their performance worse, often due to a failure in self-regulation (Steel, 2007; Steel, 2010; Tuckman, 1991). There are five types studied: General Procrastination (difficulties in daily task performance due to poor time management; Ferrari, 1995), Academic Procrastination (leaving schoolwork until the last minute; Solomon and Rothblum, 1984), Decision-making Procrastination (struggling to make decisions; Effert and Ferrari, 1989), Neurotic Procrastination (delaying important life decisions; Ellis and Knaus, 1977), Non-obsessional or Non-functional Procrastination (procrastinating behavioural decisions; Ferrari, 1991). While general and academic procrastination involves task avoidance, and are often seen as harmless, they can make individuals feel ineffective (Milgram, Mey-Tal and Levison, 1998), whereas the others relate to decision-making.

ACADEMIC PROCRASTINATION

Imagine a student sets out to tackle a big project, only to find themselves pulled away by friends. Another student plans to hit the books during lunch, but a reality TV show steals their attention. And then there's the student who aims to dive into homework but ends up cleaning up after their roommate instead. These are all examples of a common struggle; academic procrastination. It's a unique kind of delay tactic, specific to schoolwork.

Academic procrastination occurs when individuals are fully aware of the need to complete academic tasks but fail to do so within the expected timeframe (Wolters, 2003). In academics, procrastination it is especially widespread, with at least half of all students reported to engage in it (Ferrari et al., 2009; Solomon & Rothblum, 1984). Some studies suggest its prevalence is increasing, possibly due to more technology use among students (Steel, 2007; Reinecke & Hofmann, 2016). Procrastination is linked to lower academic performance and psychological distress among students (Kim & Seo, 2015; Stöber & Joormann, 2001; Tice & Baumeister, 1997; Van Eerde, 2003). In college students, academic procrastination significantly impairs subsequent academic performance (Gareau et al., 2019), particularly affecting younger students, and higher levels of academic procrastination are more detrimental to academic success (Goroshit and Hen, 2019).

Research shows that increased anxiety may affect the onset of procrastination in students (Sayers, 2003). This is maybe because the students are routinely assessed under deadline, which causes anxiety among them, and thus, procrastination may be a source of coping mechanism for anxious students. The onset of anxiety can also be linked with the role of psychological and environmental variables in various academic problems, which also impacts student's personal and academic lives (Mohammadi et al, 2023). Researchers suggest that chronic procrastination hampers students' ability to effectively manage their academic responsibilities, hindering their progress toward achieving academic success. This inability to organize their academic affairs can lead to feelings of depression and anxiety, while also eroding their self-confidence (Johansson et al., 2023; Cjuno et al., 2023).

CAREER ANXIETY

Anxiety, as described by Spielberger (1972), encompasses feelings of tension, apprehension, and worry, along with physiological arousal. It's an emotional state that arises from perceiving threats, including threats to future happiness, self-esteem, and one's ability to navigate life experiences (Dobson, 1985; Epstein, 1985). Spielberger (1972) distinguished between state anxiety, which arises in response to specific threatening situations, and trait anxiety, which reflects individual differences in anxiety proneness and the tendency to perceive situations as threatening. Research suggests that state anxiety, rather than trait anxiety, is a strong predictor of career outcomes such as certainty and indecision (Campagna & Curtis, 2007).

Career anxiety has become increasingly prevalent among college students during the pandemic period, where college students have increasingly experienced career anxiety, as evidenced by rising rates of anxiety diagnoses reported in the National College Health Assessment. It is defined as “negative emotions experienced before or during various stages of the career decision-making process and during job performance” (Shin & Lee, 2019, p. 110). Similar to general anxiety, career anxiety stems from concerns about the future and the process of shaping one's career path.

Career anxiety is recognized as a key factor negatively affecting both psychological and career-related outcomes. Career anxiety is often viewed as a form of social anxiety, as it revolves around individuals' roles as students or professionals within society. Throughout adolescence, there is a gradual rise in career anxiety, with students becoming increasingly concerned about their academic and professional futures (Mallet, 2002). Numerous studies in the literature have highlighted a strong

relationship between anxiety levels and career indecision (Campagna & Curtis, 2007; Öztemel, 2013; Santos & Ferreira, 2012).

RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

Procrastination is widespread among students, as indicated by various research findings. There exists a significant body of research exploring the link between procrastination and performance, particularly in academic settings. However, findings have been inconsistent. Some studies have highlighted the detrimental impact of procrastination on learning and achievement, citing lower grades and increased likelihood of course withdrawals (e.g., Aremu et al., 2011; Balkis, 2013).

In the context of career anxiety, excessive procrastination may exacerbate feelings of uncertainty and apprehension about one's future professional prospects. Students who struggle with procrastination may find it challenging to take proactive steps toward their career goals, leading to heightened levels of anxiety and a sense of unpreparedness for the challenges ahead. Thus, addressing procrastination behaviours becomes crucial not only for academic success but also for alleviating career-related stress and fostering a greater sense of confidence and readiness for the future. Given the mixed findings on the relationship between procrastination and academic performance, there is a need for further investigation, particularly considering the potential relationship between the two variables. So basically, the present study aims to measure the relationship between career anxiety and academic procrastination among college undergraduates.

METHOD

Participants

The present study comprises a sample of 100 college undergraduates studying in different fields, out of which 23% are males and 77% are females. The sampling method used in this study was non-probability sampling, namely purposive and convenience sampling. The inclusion criteria were met for students currently enrolled in any major undergraduate program, falling in the age group of 18 to 22 years of age ($M=20.35$ years).

MEASURES

Academic Procrastination Scale

The Academic Procrastination Scale (APS), developed by McCloskey (2011), is multidimensional. It evaluates procrastination specifically related to academic tasks such as term papers, exams, and projects within an academic setting. The scale comprises 25 items, rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = disagree; 5 = agree). Unlike other procrastination scales, the APS focuses exclusively on academic procrastination rather than general procrastination tendencies. Additionally, it includes reverse scoring on items 1, 8, 12, 14, and 25.

Career Anxiety Scale

The Career Anxiety Scale, developed by Çetin Gündüz and Nalbantoğlu Yılmaz (2016) is composed of two factors, i.e., family effect with 5 items and choice of profession with 9 items, making a total of 14 items. The scoring of the responses is to be done on a 5-point Likert type graded between “strongly disagree (1)” and “strongly agree (5)”. High scores obtained from each dimension of the scale reveal that career anxiety related to the relevant dimension is experienced at a higher level, while lower scores relate to low career anxiety. The reliability of the scale was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency coefficient, yielding reliability coefficients of .80 and .74 for the first and second factors, respectively.

PROCEDURE

The data collection began by first identifying the standardized scales for both the variables. The set of questions of the final scales were then transferred into a Google Form. Furthermore, the cover letter, consent form, and demographic sheets were prepared. Additionally, it was ensured that, the people who are currently pursuing undergraduate were eligible to fill the form. The participants were assured of the confidentiality, and they were informed that the responses were retained only for educational purposes. The data collected was transferred to a Google spreadsheet for analysis. The raw data was thoroughly scrutinized followed by the analysis using Pearson's correlation matrix.

Results

Table 1: Descriptive of the variables (N=100)

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation
Career Anxiety	40.59	10.564
Procrastination	75.96	18.948

In this study, descriptive statistics were employed to characterize the variables of interest, namely Career Anxiety and Procrastination. The mean score for Career Anxiety among the sample of 100 participants was found to be 40.59, indicating that, on average, individuals reported moderate levels of career-related anxiety. Additionally, the standard deviation of 10.564 indicates the extent to which individual scores deviated from this mean. For instance, some participants might have reported significantly higher or lower levels of career anxiety compared to the average. Similarly, the mean score for Procrastination was 75.96, signifying a relatively high average tendency to delay tasks among participants. The standard deviation of 18.948 highlights the variability in procrastination tendencies within the sample, with some individuals demonstrating more pronounced procrastination behaviors than others.

Table 2: Correlation Career Anxiety Procrastination

Career Anxiety	1	
Procrastination	.279**	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The Pearson's correlation coefficient between Career Anxiety and Procrastination is found to be ($r=0.279$), which is statistically significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). This indicates a positive correlation between the two variables. The significance level of 0.05 suggests that the observed correlation coefficient is unlikely to have occurred by random chance. This strengthens the confidence in the relationship and underscores the importance of considering both variables in understanding individuals' tendencies to delay tasks in relation to their anxiety about their career aspirations.

DISCUSSION

The main aim of this study was to find the relationship between career anxiety and procrastination among college graduates. The method deployed for this purpose was the survey method which fell under the genre of quantitative research methods. This method was opted for because it involves instantly obtaining data identifying the characteristics of a wide sample of interesting individuals. The sampling was done using convenience, purposive and snowball sampling.

There was a total of 100 participants, with 23 males and 77 females making it 23% males and 77% females, all being college undergraduates between the age group of 18 and 22 years old. Their demographic data was collected such as age, gender, educational qualification, and state of residence. The final formulation of the Google Form was done followed by the circulation of the form. Once the data was collected it was transferred to a Google spreadsheet. The raw data was thoroughly scrutinized, and unnecessary data were eliminated for the smooth analysis of the gathered data. Using Pearson's correlation on SPSS the data was converted in the form of tabular representations for an accurate perspective of the responses.

A Pearson correlation coefficient was computed to assess the linear relationship between career anxiety and procrastination among college graduates. There was a positive correlation between the two variables, ($r = 0.279$), $p (0.01)$. Although there isn't a very strong correlation between the two variables, it means if one variable increases, the other increases as well, and vice versa. Academic procrastination is a very common type of procrastination that refers to the inclination to put off doing academic-related work or accomplishing academic-related goals. A study suggests that procrastination and anxiety are two traits that may be paired or observed together in the graduate student experience, even though the relationship between these two variables is significant (Sayers, 2003).

Procrastination opportunities abound in academic environments. Unfortunately, it occurs far more frequently than one might think in the lives of many university students, and it can cause a range of stress-inducing thoughts and behaviours. Test anxiety, missing assignment deadlines, low semester grades, depressed affect, low self-esteem, and social anxiety are just a few of the challenges that procrastination behaviours are linked to (Beswick, Rothblum, & Mann, 1988; Ferrari, 1991; Lay, Edwards, Parker, & Endler, 1989).

Anxiety is a commonly investigated factor associated with procrastination in the research literature. The relationship between anxiety and procrastination has been explored through various approaches. Some scholars argue that anxiety serves as a key driver of persistent procrastination (McCown, Petzel, & Rupert, 1987). Despite outward appearances of relaxation and nonchalance, procrastinators often grapple with high levels of stress, accompanied by intense feelings of fear and anxiety. The study was, however, not equally distributed in terms of gender, i.e., 77% of the sample was females which might have affected the results as few studies show that females are less prone to procrastination. For instance, a study by Steel and Ferrari (2013) investigated gender disparities in procrastination behaviour among college students, revealing that females displayed notably lower levels of procrastination compared to males across various academic tasks. This suggests a potential role of gender in shaping procrastination tendencies, with females exhibiting a reduced inclination towards procrastination.

In light of the findings from various research studies, it becomes evident that there exists a significant correlation between procrastination and career anxiety among college undergraduates. For instance, a study by Yurtseven & Akpur (2018) demonstrated a positive association between procrastination tendencies and heightened levels of career anxiety among undergraduate students, along with perfectionism. Similarly, research conducted by Jones and Brown (2019) found that individuals who exhibited higher levels of procrastination were more likely to report experiencing career-related stress and anxiety. Furthermore, a longitudinal study by Kang et al. (2020) revealed that persistent procrastination behaviours during college years were predictive of greater career uncertainty and anxiety post-graduation.

CONCLUSION

Utilizing a quantitative research approach, data was collected from a sample of 100 college students where the findings revealed a positive correlation ($r=0.279$) between career anxiety and procrastination, indicating that as career anxiety increased, so did procrastination tendencies, and vice versa. It also underscores the interconnectedness of these two variables in the college student experience. The result suggests that individuals experiencing higher levels of career anxiety may be more prone to procrastination behaviours, which can potentially exacerbate feelings of uncertainty and apprehension about their future professional prospects.

IMPLICATIONS

To alleviate career anxiety among college students experiencing career anxiety, it's recommended to identify the root causes of career indecision and implement structured career guidance programs. Furthermore, offering support through family guidance and professional counselling, prioritizing counselling services tailored to individual strengths, interests, and values, encouraging career exploration, and providing ample opportunities for skill development can enhance decision-making abilities regarding career choices. These measures aim to mitigate the challenges associated with career anxiety, ultimately fostering a more confident and informed approach to career planning.

LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

One limitation is the use of a non-probabilistic sample, which limits the generalizability of our results. Additionally, relying on self-report measures poses another limitation, as participants may provide biased responses influenced by social desirability, especially when discussing a topic associated with shortcomings in task completion. Furthermore, an important limitation is the unequal distribution of the sample across genders as supported by Steel and Ferrari (2013) who revealed that females displayed notably lower levels of procrastination compared to males across various academic tasks.

Despite the prevalence of career anxiety among college students, there is a notable lack of research focusing on how students cope with this anxiety and the mechanisms that may alleviate its adverse effects (Kautish et al., 2021). Understanding how career-related stressors impact procrastination behaviors can offer valuable insights into the factors influencing academic success or failure. Conducting a qualitative study could help address this gap in research.

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A STUDY ON SELF-CONCEALMENT, PERCEIVED SOCIAL SUPPORT AND MENTAL HEALTH HELP SEEKING BEHAVIOUR AMONG YOUNG ADULTS

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ABSTRACT

Self-concealment is a psychological term that describes people's propensity to keep their emotions, thoughts, and sentiments hidden from others, even while they are dealing with serious difficulties. Another crucial element of young adults' experiences with mental health is perceived social support. Young individuals' self-concealment, perceptions of social support, and activity in search of mental health assistance all interact in complicated and nuanced ways. On one hand, self-concealment encourages an environment of emotional isolation and self-reliance, which may discourage people from seeking out professional assistance. On the other hand, a sense of social support can be a strong motivator for getting assistance by offering a safety net of comprehension and compassion. The present study aimed to investigate the correlations and gender differences in self-concealment, perceived social support and mental health help seeking behaviour among young adults (30 males and 30 females). Standardised tools were used such as Self-Concealment Scale (Larson & Chastain, 1990), Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) (Zimet et al., 1988) and Mental Health Help Seeking Attitude Scale (MHSAS) (Hammer et al., 2018). No significant correlations were found among self-concealment, perceived social support and mental health help seeking behaviour. However, significant gender differences were found in mental health help seeking behaviour among males and females. The study recommends that by creating supporting and open environments helps in building strong relationships which are helpful in reducing self-concealment tendencies and by promoting mental health education and awareness among young adults helps in declining stigma related mental health and normalising seeking mental help.

Keywords : Self Concealment, Perceived Social Support, Mental Health Help Seeking, Young Adults

INTRODUCTION

Young adulthood is a significant time of a life that is mainly characterized by multiple transitions and developments, typically adulthood spans from the late teens and to the late twenties. This particular time period is of exploration, self-discovery and establishing one's own identity. They experience profound changes in various aspects of their lives including education, career, relationships, and personal growth. These individuals go through complex emotions and sometimes young adults indulge in self-concealment that simply refers to the act of intentionally hiding or withholding personal information, feelings, or thoughts from others. There are many factors due to which young adults indulge in self-concealment such as fear of judgment, negative evaluation, criticism or rejection from others. Young adults mostly strive to fit in and to be accepted by their peers or social groups. To gain acceptance, they choose to hide, and try to conform to what they perceive as acceptable. Moreover, past betrayals, judgments and breaches of trust lead to enhanced acts of self-concealment.

Perceived social support refers to an individual's subjective perception of the availability and adequacy of support from their social network, including family, friends, and other significant relationships. It is the extent to which individuals believe that they have access to social resources that

can help individuals to cope with stress, solve problems and meet their emotional and practical needs. It plays a vital role in an individual's well-being, resilience, and overall mental health. The perception of social support is subjective and it may vary from person to person.

Mental health help-seeking behaviour refers to the actions and attitudes individuals adopt when they seek support, treatment, or professional assistance for mental health concerns. It encompasses the various steps individuals take to address their mental health needs and the factors that influence their decision to seek help. Though there are many factors that can affect mental health help seeking behaviour such as stigma, negative attitude towards mental illness and stereotypes; as many individuals hesitate to seek help due to fear of judgment, social excursion or negative stereotypes that are related to mental health illness.

SELF-CONCEALMENT

According to Larson and Chastain (1990), self-concealment is defined as “predisposition to actively conceal from others personal information that one perceives as distressing or negative. Self-concealment comprises three aspects: tendency to keep secrets to oneself, not sharing personal, painful secrets or negative thoughts about oneself and worrying about the leakage of concealed personal information.” Moreover, Derlega and Chaikin (1977) advocated “the process of self-concealment as special instance of boundary regulation in the maintenance of privacy.” Further, “self-concealment can also be viewed within a model of self-presentation or image management in which social interactions present opportunities to disclose distressing or negative personal information” (Schlenkar, 1980).

A study was conducted by Masuda et al. (2012) to investigate the relationship of mental health stigma and self-concealment with professional psychological services among African American college students. A total sample of 163 African Americans was used. The results demonstrated that both mental health stigma and self-concealment are related to professional psychological assistance. In another research, 245 young adults whose age range lies between 18-25 years were studied to examine the relationship between self-concealment and suicidality via two mediators that are unmet interpersonal needs and help-seeking attitudes. The outcomes of investigation concluded that there was a significant positive relationship between self-concealment and suicidality. Though it was also found that self-concealment is related to more negative attitude towards professional psychological help seeking however, these attitudes were not significantly associated to suicidality (Hogge & Blankenship, 2020).

PERCEIVED SOCIAL SUPPORT

Perceived social support refers to the “subjective judgment that an individual believes they can obtain respect, support, and understanding when they need help” (Lakey & Cassady, 1990 ; Prescher et al., 2022). According to Gurung (2006), perceived support refers to “a recipient's subjective judgment that providers will offer (or have offered) effective help during times of need”. Perceived social support is also defined as the availability of people who makes one feel cared about, valued and loved (Sarson et al., 1983).

A study was conducted by Loannou et al. (2019) on interrelationship between perceived social support, depressive symptom, stress and self-esteem among 344 young adults in Cyprus, aged 17-26 years. The consequences of research were that perceived social support from family and friends was significantly related to reducing depressive symptoms. Moreover, self-esteem fully mediated the relationship between social support and depressive symptoms. In addition to this, Gayman et al. (2011) did a longitudinal study for 8 years on 1,267 young adults in Miami-Dade County, Florida; to examine the significance of early adolescent family experiences on perceived family social support.

The outcomes of the study stated that early negative family experiences were related with lower perceived social support from friends and family.

MENTAL HEALTH HELP SEEKING

According to Rickwood and Thomas (2012) help seeking behaviour is defined as “any action of energetically seeking help from the health care services or from trusted people in the community and includes understanding, guidance, treatment and general support when feeling in trouble or encountering stressful circumstances.” Further, Cornally and McCarthy (2011) advocated that “help seeking refers to the factor that leads to a person seeking assistance for a potential or actual problem. They also asserted that help seeking comprises four components, namely; antecedents of seeking help, defining the attributes of seeking help, consequences of seeking help and finally, empirical referents of seeking help

Vanheusden et al. (2009) conducted a study on 2,258 young adults in south-west Netherlands among which 830 adults confirmed having mental health problems during the past year. The result confirmed that higher levels on the intra psychic scale and treatment control scale were related with higher likelihood of mental health service use. However, higher levels of personal control indicated lower likelihood of mental health service use. In another study by Saunders et al. (1994), a sample of 17,193 students was collected, among which 24.9% students identified themselves as having serious mental problems. Students who decided to seek professional mental help were associated with a history of abuse, physical health, suicidal ideation, and gender. And students who obtained mental health aid were related to suicidal ideation, informal help-seeking behaviour, interaction between race and socioeconomic status and parental marital status.

METHODOLOGY

Purpose

The purpose of the study is to investigate the correlations and gender differences in self-concealment, perceived social support and mental health help seeking behaviour among young adults.

Hypothesis

1. There will be a significant negative correlation between self-concealment and perceived social support.
2. There will be a significant positive correlation between self-concealment and mental health help seeking behaviour.
3. There will be a significant positive correlation between perceived social support and mental health help seeking behaviour.
4. There will be significant gender differences in self-concealment, perceived social support and mental health help seeking behaviour.

Sample

The sample consisted of 60 young adults (30 males and 30 females) between the ages of 18 -25 years. The sample was collected from Punjab.

Measures

Self-Concealment Scale (Larson & Chastain, 1990)

The 10 items making up the Self-Concealment Scale used in the data analyses. Scale items refer to a) a self-reported tendency to keep things to oneself, b) possession of personally distressing secret or negative thoughts about oneself that have been shared with few or no other person, c) apprehension about the disclosure of concealed personal information. The test is based on a 5 point Likert scale, with options ranging from “strongly disagree (1)” to “strongly agree (5).” The internal consistency of Cronbach alpha is 0.83 and test-retest reliability revealed a strong correlation ($r = 0.81$).

Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) (Zimet et al., 1988)

The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) is a short instrument designed to measure an individual's perception of support from 3 sources: family, friends and a significant other. It contains 12 items rated on a seven-point Likert-type scale with scores ranging from “very strongly disagree” (1) to “very strongly agree” (7). The MSPSS has proven to be psychometrically sound in diverse samples and to have good internal reliability and test-retest reliability, and robust factorial validity.

Mental Help Seeking Attitude Scale (MHSAS) (Hammer et al., 2018)

The Mental Help Seeking Attitude Scale (MHSAS) is a psychological assessment tool designed to measure an individual's attitudes toward seeking professional help for mental health issues. This scale aims to understand the various factors influencing people's willingness to seek therapy or counselling when faced with mental health challenges. The scale typically consists of a series of statements or questions related to beliefs, feelings, and perceptions about mental health professionals and services. Higher scores on the MHSAS indicate more positive attitudes toward seeking mental health help, whereas lower scores suggest more negative or ambivalent attitudes. The MHSAS has been validated through empirical research, showing good reliability and validity.

Procedure

The participants were informed about the purpose of the research and the questionnaires were filled through Google forms. Each participant was thanked for their cooperation. Standardized psychological tests were administered to the participants.

Analysis of Data

Scoring for all the given tests was done as per the scoring instructions given in the manuals. The raw scores were tabulated and subjected to various statistical analyses. Keeping in view the objectives of the study, statistical analysis such as Mean, Standard Deviation, Correlation Analysis and T test were conducted. Correlation analysis was carried out to test the relationship between the variables. Moreover, t-test was used to reveal gender differences in variables. Before carrying out statistical tests, the assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variance were checked. Moreover, the responses that emerged through the semi-structured interview schedule were analysed qualitatively.

RESULTS

Table 1: N, Mean and Standard Deviation

	Gender	Self-Concealment	Perceived Social Support	Mental Health Help Seeking Behaviour
N	Male	30	30	30
	Female	30	30	30
Mean	Male	29.3	60.5	45.3
	Female	31.2	66.5	54.5
Standard Deviation	Male	7.97	19.3	10.5
	Female	8.59	11.2	11.0

Table 2

<i>Correlation Matrix</i>			
	Self-Concealment	Perceived Social Support	Mental Health Help Seeking Behaviour
Self-Concealment	—		
Perceived Social Support	-0.172	—	
Mental Health Help Seeking Behaviour	0.117	0.190	—
Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$			

Table 3

<i>Independent Samples T-Test</i>						
		Statistic	df	p	Mean difference	SE difference
Self-Concealment	Student's t	-0.903	58.0	0.370	-1.93	2.14
Perceived Social Support	Student's t	-1.474 ^a	58.0	0.146	-6.00	4.07
Mental Health Help Seeking Behaviour	Student's t	-3.289	58.0	0.002	-9.13	2.78

DISCUSSION

On the basis of correlation statistical analysis, the results depicted that there is a negative correlation between self-concealment and perceived social support ($r=-0.172$), moreover, a positive relationship was observed between self-concealment and mental health seeking behaviour ($r=0.117$), along with, perceived social support and mental health help seeking behaviour ($r=0.190$). However, all the results were statistically non-significant, hence leading to the rejection of the hypotheses.

Alternatively, t-test was also used to study the differences among males and females in the variables that are being studied. No statistically significant differences were observed in self-concealment and perceived social support among males and females, thus resulting in rejecting our hypothesis that there will be significant gender differences between self-concealment and perceived social support.

In contrast to this, statistically significant differences were observed in mental health help seeking behaviour among males and females ($t = 0.002$). Thus, accepting our hypothesis which states that there will be significant gender differences in mental health help seeking behaviour. However, it was

observed that females were higher on mental health help seeking behaviour as compared to males. The results on present study are consistent with the past study conducted by Havik et al. (2017) which demonstrated that females were better in awareness regarding mental health services and seeking for mental health help as compared to males. Likewise, results of another study depicted that females were more keen and favourable preferences to seek help regarding mental health than males (Mackenzie et al., 2006).

CONCLUSION

Self-concealment is a psychological term that describes people's propensity to keep their emotions, thoughts, and sentiments hidden from others, even while they are dealing with serious difficulties. Another crucial element of young adults' experiences with mental health is perceived social support. Young individuals' self-concealment, perceptions of social support, and activity in search of mental health assistance all interact in complicated and nuanced ways. On the one hand, self-concealment encourages an environment of emotional isolation and self-reliance, which may discourage people from seeking out professional assistance. On the other hand, a sense of social support can be a strong motivator for getting assistance by offering a safety net of comprehension and compassion. The present study aimed to investigate the correlations and gender differences in self-concealment, perceived social support and mental health help seeking behaviour among young adults (30 males and 30 females). Standardised tools were used such as Self-Concealment Scale (Larson & Chastain, 1990), Multi-dimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) (Zimet et al., 1988) and Mental Help Seeking Attitude Scale (MHSAS) (Hammer et al., 2018). No significant correlations were found among self-concealment, perceived social support and mental health help seeking behaviour. However, significant gender differences were found in mental health help seeking behaviour among males and females. The study recommended that by creating supporting and open environments helps in building strong relationships which are helpful in reducing self-concealment tendencies and by promoting mental health education and awareness among young adults helps in declining stigma related mental health and normalising seeking mental help.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Self-concealment refers to the tendency to actively hide or withhold personal thoughts, emotions, or information from oneself and others. Here are some practical and effective ways to reduce self-concealment. The best thing is to develop self-reflection, as it is important to introspect. Start practicing mindfulness or journaling to become more aware of thoughts. Try to create a supportive environment that encourages openness and authenticity. Building relationships on trust helps one to express their innermost thoughts and emotions without any sense of judgment and rejection.

Enhancing perceived social support can provide numerous benefits such as improved mental health, enhanced resilience and many more advantages. Some strategies that can help to improve perceived social support are by strengthening the existing relationships by investing your time and effort into nurturing personal relationships. This could be done by communicating, engaging in activities with others, being a good listener, expanding social networks and by showing genuine interest in other's lives.

Improving mental health help-seeking behaviour is essential for individuals to address their mental health concerns and accept appropriate support. By promoting mental health education and creating awareness about the importance of seeking help can enhance the mental health help seeking attitude among people. Reducing stigma and normalizing help-seeking behaviour can encourage individuals to seek assistance when needed. of judgment, discrimination and rejection helps them to seek help when they require it.

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BREAKING THE SILENCE: EXPLORING THE MENTAL HEALTH STIGMA AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS SEEKING PROFESSIONAL PSYCHOLOGICAL HELP AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, the stigma surrounding mental health has gained significant attention, yet stigma remains a formidable barrier to seeking professional psychological help, particularly among college students. The primary aim of the study was to evaluate the role of mental health stigma in influencing attitudes towards seeking professional psychological help among college students. The research utilized a cross-sectional design with a retrospective approach, involving 100 college students aged between 18 to 25 years, encompassing both genders, selected through convenience sampling. The instruments employed in the study included a socio-demographic sheet, the Revised - Attitudes Toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help Scale-Short Form (ATSPPH-SF), Perceived Public Stigma, and Personal Stigma Scale. Descriptive analysis, Pearson Correlation Coefficient, and Stepwise Regression Analysis was used for the analysis. The findings of the study revealed that male students exhibited higher scores on Perceived Stigma and Personal Stigma compared to female students, while female students demonstrated greater scores on Attitude towards Seeking Professional Psychological Help in contrast to male students. Moreover, both Perceived Stigma and Personal Stigma were significantly negatively correlated with Attitude towards Seeking Professional Psychological Help. Furthermore, Perceived Stigma and Personal Stigma were significantly positively associated with each other. Additionally, Personal Stigma, rather than Perceived Stigma, significantly negatively predicted Attitudes towards Seeking Professional Psychological Help, with personal stigma accounting for 26% of the variance in attitudes among college students.

Mental health stigma emerged as a substantial barrier to seeking psychological help. The findings underscore the critical need for targeted interventions aimed at destigmatizing mental health issues and promoting help-seeking behaviours among college students.

Keywords: Perceived Stigma, Personal Stigma, Attitudes Toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help, College Students.

INTRODUCTION

According to a 2020-2021 study, it was found that over 60% of university students fulfil the criteria for at least one mental health issue (Lipson et al., 2022). In the year 2023, a significant 76% of college students encountered moderate to severe degree of psychological distress, with anxiety diagnosed in 36% of them and depression in 28%. Additionally, college students are also affected by other mental health conditions such as trauma, bipolar disorders, eating disorders, substance use disorders and obsessive-compulsive disorders (American College Health Association, 2023).

According to the College Student Mental Health Report (2022), it was revealed that approximately 40% of students believe that their educational institution is not adequately addressing the issue of

student mental health. In addition, of the 40% of students who reported their mental health as fair or poor, only 20% sought help within the school premises. It is crucial to prioritize the management of mental health issues among college students, as research indicates that before the age of 24 nearly 75% of mental disorders manifests (Kessler et al., 2005). Additionally, early mental health issues have been linked to negative consequences in academic performance, career prospects, physical health, and social interactions (Ettner et al., 1997; Breslau et al., 2008; Kessler et al., 1998; Eisenberg et al., 2009).

Despite the higher prevalence of mental health issues among college students and significant negative repercussions, a considerable percentage of students are seeking professional help. Hence, it's crucial to explore the factors influencing their “Attitudes Toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help” (hereafter, referred to as ATSPPH). Upon reviewing the literature, mental health stigma emerged as a significant influencer on students' willingness to seek professional help. While, mental illness stigma is a commonly used term, it manifests in various specific forms (Eisenberg et al., 2009). Perceived stigma pertains to the degree to which individuals perceive that society as a whole maintains stigmatising attitudes towards mental illness, while Personal stigma pertains to the degree to which individuals personally maintain stigmatising attitudes towards mental illness (Evans et al., 2023).

Stigma and discrimination have the potential to exacerbate symptoms, decrease the chances of seeking treatment, diminish optimism, lower self-worth, intensify psychiatric manifestations, impede social interactions, decrease treatment adherence, and create challenges in the workplace (Singhal, 2024). Therefore, the present study aimed to assess the association between Perceived Public Stigma, Personal Stigma and ATSPPH among college students.

METHODOLOGY

Research Objectives

1. To examine gender differences in Perceived Stigma, Personal Stigma, and ATSPPH among college students.
2. To explore the relationship between Perceived Stigma, Personal Stigma, and ATSPPH among college students.
3. To determine whether Perceived Stigma and Personal Stigma significantly predict ATSPPH among college students.

Hypotheses

H1: There is a significant difference in Perceived Stigma and personal Stigma scores between male and female college students.

H2: There is a significant association between Perceived Stigma, Personal Stigma and ATSPPH among college students.

H3: Perceived Stigma and Personal Stigma significantly predict ATSPPH among college students.

METHODS AND PARTICIPANTS

The study adhered to the principles outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki. It utilized a cross-sectional design with a retrospective approach and was conducted in Jaipur between March and April 2024. Initially, a brief introduction about the study and its rationale was circulated to college students through WhatsApp groups and Facebook. Upon receiving consent from the students to participate, a Google Form containing a standardized self-report questionnaire was shared. The data were collected using a Google Form due to the widespread access to the internet and higher levels of computer literacy among college students (Couper, 2000). To mitigate response bias, students were assured of

the confidentiality of their data and informed that it would be used solely for research purposes. The study included a sample of 100 college students who met the following inclusion and exclusion criteria: individuals of both sexes aged 18 to 25, proficient in reading and understanding the English language. Exclusion criteria comprised students with a history of severe psychiatric illness and medical conditions. Simple random sampling was employed to recruit participants for the study.

Materials

Socio-Demographic Sheet: It consists of students' age, sex, family type, marital status, education and residence.

Revised - Attitudes Toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help Scale-Short Form (ATSPPH-SF): The measurement of general attitudes toward seeking professional help for mental health problems was conducted using the 10-item revised ATSPPH-SF. Participants rated each item on a 4-point Likert-type scale, with a score of 3 indicating agreement and a score of 0 indicating disagreement. Items 2, 4, 8, 9, and 10 were scored in reverse. To obtain a total score, the individual item scores were summed together. Greater scores on the scale indicate a positive outlook on seeking professional assistance. The relationship between the 10-item version and the full 29-item scale was determined to be 0.87 (Picco et al., 2016; Fischer & Farina, 1995).

Perceived Public Stigma (PPS): The PPS is an adapted version of the Perceived-Devaluation-Discrimination Scale which was initially developed by Link and colleagues in 1989. However, in the present study, we utilized the adapted version of the PDD scale, as proposed by Eisenberg et al. in 2009, to measure perceived stigma among college students. This adapted scale comprises 12 items, with each statement rated on a 6-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly agree" (0) to "strongly disagree" (5). The adapted scale demonstrated high internal reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .89, indicating the consistency of responses across the items (Eisenberg et al., 2009).

Personal Stigma: The Personal Stigma scale was created by modifying three items from the perceived stigma scale, replacing the phrase "Most people" with "I." These three items addressed negative attitudes, accepting behaviours, and accepting attitudes. An index of personal stigma was established by averaging the scores of the three items on a scale of 0 to 5, where higher scores indicate higher levels of stigma, similar to the approach used for perceived stigma. The internal consistency of this scale was found to be relatively high (Cronbach's $\alpha = .78$) (Eisenberg et al., 2009).

Statistical Analysis

The study utilized IBM-SPSS version 22.0 for Windows, developed by IBM Corp. (Armonk, NY) and released in 2013, for data analysis. Descriptive analysis was initially conducted to examine the frequency, mean, and standard deviation (SD) of the study variables. Subsequently, the Pearson Correlation Coefficient was employed to investigate the significant relationships among Perceived Stigma, Personal Stigma, and ATSPPH in college students. Finally, Stepwise regression analysis was employed to determine whether Perceived Stigma and Personal Stigma significantly predicted ATSPPH in college students. The significance level for all analyses was set at $p < 0.05$.

RESULTS

Socio-Demographic Characteristics

The study sample consisted of 100 college students, with a mean age of 21.57 years (SD = 2.22). The sample comprised 62% male students and 38% female students. Regarding academic pursuits, 59% of students were pursuing PG courses, while 41% were pursuing UG courses. In terms of family structure, 45% of students belonged to joint families, while 55% belonged to nuclear families. The

majority of students resided in urban areas (85%), with 15% residing in rural areas. Additionally, all students were unmarried (100%).

Comparative Analysis

The study conducted Independent t-tests to examine significant differences based on gender among the study variables. Results presented in Table 1 revealed that male students exhibited higher Perceived Stigma scores ($M = 44.23$, $SD = 7.71$) compared to female students ($M = 38.29$, $SD = 2.40$), a difference that was statistically significant ($t = 5.628$, $p < 0.01$), with a Cohen's d effect size of 1.11. Similarly, male students demonstrated higher Personal Stigma scores ($M = 12.79$, $SD = 1.01$) compared to female students ($M = 10.60$, $SD = 1.70$), a difference that was statistically significant ($t = 7.180$, $p < 0.01$), with a Cohen's d effect size of 1.56. In contrast, female students exhibited higher scores on ATSPPH ($M = 11.76$, $SD = 3.75$) compared to male students ($M = 9.14$, $SD = 1.42$), a difference that was statistically significant ($t = -4.116$, $p < 0.01$), with a Cohen's d effect size of 0.92.

Table 1: Comparison of Study Variables between Male and Female College Students

Variables	Groups	Mean	SD	T	P	Cohen's d
Perceived Stigma	Male	44.23	7.71	5.628	.000	1.11
	Female	38.29	2.40			
Personal Stigma	Male	12.79	1.01	7.180	.000	1.56
	Female	10.60	1.70			
ATSPPH	Male	9.14	1.42	-4.116	.000	0.92
	Female	11.76	3.75			

Note: **ATSPPH**= Attitude towards Seeking Professional Psychological Help

Pearson Correlation Analysis

The study conducted Pearson Correlation analysis to assess the relationships between the study variables. The results, presented in Table 2, indicate that Perceived stigma and Personal stigma exhibited a significant positive relationship with each other ($r = .279$, $p < 0.01$). Furthermore, ATSPPH demonstrated a significant inverse correlation with Perceived stigma ($r = -.270$, $p < 0.01$) and Personal stigma ($r = -.512$, $p < 0.01$).

Table 2: Correlation analysis of the Perceived stigma, Personal stigma and ATSPPH

	Perceived Stigma	Personal Stigma	ATSPPH	Mean	SD
Perceived Stigma	-			41.97	6.873
Personal Stigma	.279**	-		11.96	1.68
ATSPPH	-.270**	-.512**	-	10.14	2.85

Note: **Significance at 0.01 level; ATSPPH= Attitude Towards Seeking Professional Psychological Help

Stepwise Regression Analysis

The study employed Stepwise Regression Analysis to examine whether Personal and Perceived stigma could predict ATSPPH in college students. Results presented in Table 3 revealed that Personal stigma significantly and negatively predicted ATSPPH ($\beta = -.867$, $p < 0.01$) among college students. The R-squared value ($R^2 = 0.26$) indicated that 26% of the variance in ATSPPH can be explained by Personal stigma. Conversely, Perceived stigma did not significantly predict ATSPPH among college students.

Table 3: {Stepwise Regression Analysis Predicting ATSPPH

Predictors	β	95% CI		T	P
		LLCI	ULCI		
(Constant)	20.513	16.992	24.034	11.562	.000**
Personal Stigma	-.867	-1.159	-.576	-5.904	.000**

Durbin - Watson = 1.775; $R^2 = 0.26$; ** $P < 0.01$



Figure 1: Attitude Towards Seeking Professional Psychological Help

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to explore the role of mental health stigma in influencing ATSPPH in college students. The findings of the study are discussed following prior hypotheses and the existing body of literature.

The primary findings of the study were that there were significant sex differences in Perceived stigma, Personal Stigma and ATSPPH in college students. In particular, male students showed a higher level of Personal stigma compared to female students which is consistent with previous studies (Pompeo-Fargnoli, 2022; Eisenberg et al., 2009). Studies have indicated that gender is a significant factor that significantly predicts Personal stigma.

A study conducted on medical students, which used Depression Stigma Scale (DSS) to measure personal stigma indicated that males had a mean score of 14.85 on DSS, compared to 12.99 for females. Males were also more likely to agree with statements like "I would not vote for a class cadre if I knew they had been depressed" and "I would not make friends with him if I knew he had been depressed compared to females (Qiu et al., 2022). Some studies suggest that each gender may express self-stigma differently. For instance, within the demographic of young adults suffering from mental illness, the self-stigma experienced by men is associated with their diagnosis of mental illness, whereas women's self-stigma is linked to their perception of being scrutinized by others due to their mental illness diagnosis (Elkington et al., 2012). In addition, Men who have been diagnosed with schizophrenia have raised concerns regarding the stigma surrounding mental illness in the workplace. In contrast, women have expressed concerns about both the stigma associated with mental illness and

its effects on their relationships with significant others i.e. family members (Loganathan & Murthy, 2011).

Similarly, the study also found that male students had higher levels of perceived stigma than female students. The findings are in contrast to the previous findings where a study has reported that the mean score for overall perceived stigma did not show any statistically significant difference between males and females (Ataro et al., 2020). In contrast, a recent study involving 60 patients seeking psychiatric assistance at a clinic in Bangalore, revealed that women expressed a higher level of perceived stigma related to mental illness in comparison to men. The authors of this particular study propose that women might possess a heightened sensitivity towards various types of stigmas, including mental health stigma, due to their regular exposure to discriminatory practices associated with their gender status in India (Kulesza et al., 2014).

Based on these findings, it can be assumed that the gender difference concerning perceived stigma is not clearly defined. Further research is warranted to assess whether males or females hold higher levels of perceived stigma related to mental health conditions. Addressing these mental health stigmas is crucial as gender-based stigma has the potential to significantly influence a student's educational achievements. When educators propagate the belief that certain genders are inherently inferior in subjects like math or science, students may absorb these messages, resulting in decreased motivation and reluctance to engage with challenging coursework in these areas. Consequently, these stereotypes can have long-lasting repercussions on students' future professional opportunities. Additionally, transgender individuals frequently encounter bias and mistreatment from both classmates and teachers, contributing to emotions of embarrassment, inequity, and self-blame that can impede their academic success (Varthana, 2013).

The present study also revealed that ATSPPH was more prevalent among female students in comparison to male students, a trend that has been supported by previous research. Existing studies have shown that females are more inclined to seek professional psychological assistance than men (Nam et al., 2010). Some studies proposed that the variance in attitudes towards seeking psychological aid may be a reflection of gender role distinctions (Judd et al., 2008). For instance, men's social status, higher degree of authority, and problem-solving or decision-making capabilities may impact their acceptance of a mental disorder diagnosis. Their challenges in expressing emotions and feelings could also affect their willingness to seek help for psychological issues, traditional male stereotypes and the depiction of men as powerful by the media (Shawcroft & Coyne, 2022; Amit et al., 2009; Chan & Hayashi, 2010; Judd et al., 2008), as well as the limited emotional expression among male students (Nam et al., 2010), lack of motivation, stigma associated with emotional disclosure, and fear of intimacy (Silverberg, 1986). Additionally, it has been noted that female students exhibit a propensity for adopting more moderate perspectives when it comes to seeking assistance, primarily owing to their inclination towards embracing novel concepts (Nam et al., 2010).

The current study explored the association between Perceived stigma, Personal stigma, and ATSPPH. Results revealed a significant negative correlation between Perceived stigma, Personal stigma, and ATSPPH. Upon further examination of the impact of Personal stigma and Perceived stigma on ATSPPH, it was observed that Personal stigma, rather than Perceived stigma, significantly predicted ATSPPH in college students. Previous research has consistently highlighted mental health stigma as a major obstacle to seeking psychological assistance (Eisenberg et al., 2009). In a research study, it was noted that Attitudes towards help-seeking were significantly predicted by personal stigma. In the same study, it was observed that there existed a negative correlation between individuals' attitudes towards seeking help and their personal stigma. This implies that individuals who held more positive attitudes towards seeking help tended to have lower levels of personal stigma. Furthermore, it has been found

that there exists a weak association between elevated levels of positive ATSPPH and the presence of public stigma (Evans et al., 2023). There are two main levels at which mental illness stigma is typically understood: Perceived stigma and Personal stigma. Perceived stigma refers to the extent to which individuals believe that society as a whole holds stigmatising attitudes towards mental illness, whereas Personal stigma refers to the extent to which individuals personally hold stigmatising attitudes towards mental illness (Evans et al., 2023).

Stigma and discrimination have the potential to exacerbate symptoms, decrease the chances of seeking treatment, diminish optimism, lower self-worth, intensify psychiatric manifestations, impede social interactions, decrease treatment adherence, and create challenges in the workplace (Singhal, 2024). According to the Basic models of help-seeking for health problems, an individual's inclination to recognize the necessity for help and their evaluation of the advantages and drawbacks of receiving treatment is likely to be influenced by their beliefs and attitudes towards mental illness and its treatment. Consequently, these factors play a crucial role in determining whether the individual will actively seek treatment or not (Eisenberg et al., 2009).

Following previous studies the present study suggests that as individuals perceive stigma more strongly, they also tend to internalize it more, leading to increased personal stigma (Pompeo-Fargnoli, 2022). Eisenberg and colleagues' study suggests a strong association between personal stigma and perceived stigma among students. Their findings indicate that students who experience high levels of personal stigma also tend to perceive stigma intensely. This implies that there's a close relationship between how individuals perceive stigma from society and how they internalize it personally. In essence, the study suggests that high personal stigma typically accompanies high perceived stigma, reinforcing the notion that one's perception of societal attitudes influences their own attitudes and beliefs about stigmatized issues (Eisenberg et al., 2009; Link, 1987). Another explanation is that, individuals with high personal stigma may experience cognitive dissonance if they were to acknowledge that their views are not widely shared by others or are socially unacceptable. To alleviate this discomfort, they may engage in a process of assumption, assuming that others hold similar stigmatizing views (Eisenberg et al., 2009). This assumption allows them to maintain consistency between their personal beliefs and their perception of societal attitudes, reducing cognitive dissonance.

LIMITATION

The study has several limitations. Firstly, its cross-sectional design limits the ability to establish causality, highlighting the need for more robust longitudinal studies to better understand the relationships observed. Secondly, the sample was drawn exclusively from a single institute located in Jaipur, potentially compromising the generalizability of the findings to other settings or populations.

CONCLUSION

The study results revealed that male students exhibited a greater degree of Perceived stigma and Personal stigma in comparison to their female counterparts. Conversely, female students demonstrated a higher score on ATSPPH when compared to male students. Moreover, it was observed that both Perceived stigma and Personal stigma displayed a significant negative correlation with ATSPPH. Additionally, a significant positive relationship was found between perceived stigma and personal stigma. Upon conducting a thorough examination, it was observed that Personal stigma significantly predicted ATSPPH among college students.

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LOVE BOMBING AND EMOTIONAL ABUSE AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Love bombing is an abuse tactic used to lure or keep someone in a relationship. It often involves intense displays of affection, admiration, and grand gestures. Love bombing can happen at any relationship stage but is more common when two people first meet. While all this attention may seem flattering, it can be dangerously manipulative. Emotional abuse is generally considered any harmful abusive behavior that is not physical. A relationship becomes emotionally abusive when the pattern occurs repeatedly over time. While there are no physical scars or broken bones, emotional abuse is a form of domestic violence. Emotionally abusive relationships do not always include physical violence, but psychological abuse can be a precursor to physical harm in a relationship. Other names for emotional abuse include mental abuse and psychological abuse. A sample of 45 college students who were dating for a period of 6 months was collected. Standardized scales were used to measure love bombing and emotional abuse among people in a relationship or situationship. Results found out that none of the results were significantly correlated. However, there was a positive correlation between love bombing and emotional abuse. It's not always possible to avoid an emotionally manipulative or abusive situation, and abuse is never a victim or survivor's fault. However, understanding common signs of love bombing and what to do if a new relationship feels off may help one spot potentially problematic behavior before one gets too emotionally invested. Setting clear boundaries, seeking support from trusted individuals or professionals, and prioritizing self-care are crucial. Open communication about feelings and concerns is essential, as is evaluating whether the relationship is healthy in the long term. If the abuse persists and the partner is unwilling to change, seeking therapy or considering ending the relationship may be necessary for one's own well-being.

Keywords: Love Bombing, Emotional Abuse, College Students.

INTRODUCTION

Love bombing is a manipulative tactic often used by individuals with narcissistic personality disorder to gain control in a relationship. Friends, family, or romantic partners can love-bomb by showering one with gifts, being overly complimentary, or constantly giving the other partner attention. These actions may make the partner feel loved and dependent, which they may use against the person to isolate and control them. Love bombing can happen quickly in a relationship and slowly progress into an unhealthy and abusive relationship. "Love bombing is characterized by excessive attention, admiration, and affection with the goal to make the recipient feel dependent and obligated to that person," explains licensed therapist Sasha Jackson, LCSW. The chilling tactic is often used by narcissists, abusers, and even cult leaders. What makes love bombing so confusing (and difficult to untangle oneself from) is that at first, it actually feels really good thanks to all the dopamine and endorphin boosts you get from the bomber's lavish gifts and attention. "You feel special, needed, loved, valuable, and worthy, which are all the components that contribute to and increase a person's self-esteem," Jackson says. "Daters guilty of love bombing feel the need to fill an emotional void with the love of another person, but once they have that person and feel secure in the relationship, their true feelings can come to the surface, and the instability unravels from there," Simone adds, "You may

feel like you owe a love bomber the same amount of adoration and loyalty in return for all of the extra gifts and attention you have received, but true acts of love do not need reciprocation and are inspired from within.”

Emotional abuse can include verbal assault, dominance, control, isolation, ridicule, or the use of intimate knowledge for degradation (Follingstad, Coyne, & Gambone, 2005). It targets the emotional and psychological well-being of the victim, and it is often a precursor to physical abuse. There is a high correlation between physical abuse and emotional abuse in batterer populations (Gondolf, Heckert, & Kimmel, 2002), and verbal abuse early in a relationship predicts subsequent physical spousal abuse (Schumacher & Leonard, 2005). Emotional abuse often involves disregarding another person’s emotional needs and can occur in various relationships, including romantic relationships, friendships, families, and the workplace.

One of the challenges of identifying emotional abuse is that it can be subtle and covert, making it difficult to recognize. Individuals may not realize they are being emotionally abused, particularly if the abuse has been happening for a while. However, emotional abuse typically involves a pattern of behavior that occurs over time, rather than a one-time event. The abuser may isolate the victim, withhold affection, or use threatening language. Victims might experience low self-esteem, anxiety, depression, and feel constantly on guard, walking on “eggshells” around the abuser. Recognizing these signs is crucial for intervention and seeking help.

Situationships can be defined as "romantic relationships with no clarity or label." They might include affection, sexual behaviors, and spending time together but also involve low levels of commitment. Put simply, a situationship is essentially a relationship without any commitment, says Dr. Romanoff. She adds that this type of arrangement allows individuals to experience the benefits of being in a relationship and being single simultaneously. But a situationship can also leave you unsure what to say when someone asks whether you’re seeing someone. “It’s complicated” may be the only response that seems appropriate. The ambiguity of situationships can take a toll on your mental health. “Our brains really like clarity,” Dr. Albers notes. “They gravitate to black and white, so this gray area can be very hard to process and may even create anxiety.” The other pitfall of a situationship: It’s difficult to maintain, emotionally. Dr. Albers explains, “It’s very hard to stay unattached. It can feel like you’re skimming the surface of a relationship. And the ambiguity can consume a lot of energy.” That difficulty is a byproduct of how our brains work. “We’re human. And when we’re intimate with someone, our brains release a hormone called oxytocin,” she adds. Oxytocin is powerful stuff. It stimulates sexual arousal, ejaculation, contractions during pregnancy, parent-infant recognition and bonding — even lactation! Oxytocin also facilitates behaviors you might not expect, like trust. “It’s hard to override hormones like oxytocin with the logic that we’re not attached to someone,” Dr. Albers notes.

In the context of couples, the phrase "in a relationship" usually means being in a committed, long-term romantic relationship. A committed relationship is one where two or more people agree to continue being in a relationship for the foreseeable future. There's an understanding that the two will continue to spend time together, work on growing their relationship with each other, and continue nurturing their connection. People in committed relationships may choose to use identifiers like boyfriend, girlfriend, or partner to signify their relationship to others. In traditional monogamous relationships, being in a relationship also means that a couple will be romantically and sexually exclusive—that is, they won't have any other romantic or sexual partners other than each other. In non-monogamous relationships, exclusivity isn't required. Love bombing is a behavior sometimes exhibited in the early stages of a relationship where one partner excessively showers the other with affection, compliments, and attention. While it may initially feel good and flattering, it can become

concerning if it's used to manipulate or control the other person. In a relationship that's been ongoing for six months, love bombing might not be as common or as noticeable as in the very early stages, as the intensity of infatuation usually starts to stabilize over time. However, if one partner continues to excessively shower the other with affection or attention while neglecting their own needs or boundaries, it could still be considered a form of love bombing. Healthy relationships involve mutual respect, communication, and consideration for each other's needs and boundaries.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Love Bombing

Love bombing is defined as the continuous “bombing” of a person with flattery, compliments, and affection.¹ It comes in various forms—gift-giving, long-winded messages, social media interactions, and passionate declarations of love—and is often used by those with narcissistic personality disorder (NPD). Typically, a person being loved bombed will be flooded early in a relationship with their partner's desire to discuss their future together. The love bomber may be overly communicative about their feelings for the person. The partner may even claim they love the person or the person is their “soul mate” However, this behavior is rarely altruistic as the partner seeks to make gains for their hopelessly romantic expressions, whether control, success, or unwavering admiration.

The literature review by Silva et al. (2023) described the main characteristics of psychopaths including their sexual habits in their ritual of charming, dominating, and abandoning their victims, as well as explain the chaos and devastation they cause in them. Finally, suggested treatment approaches for victims in the damage recovery process. Interviews were conducted with victims of psychopaths who lived with them for more than a decade. Information concerning sexual habits was carefully categorized and explained. As support, online searches for the construction of this article were carried out in the databases of Google Scholar, PUBMED Central, Web of Science, BVS / BIREME, Science Direct, Scielo, The Cochrane Library, and also by PROSPERO. The identities of victims and psychopaths were kept confidential. Results showed that the sexual habits of psychopaths include 3 stages, a) initial love bombing, b) humiliation, and c) domination of the victim, and d) finally abandonment after sexual, emotional, and financial exploitation. The main consequences in the lives of partners include chaos, sleep and eating disorders, anger, despair, and depression, and in some cases lead to death. The authors add that psychopathy has no treatment, and due to the devastation it causes in people due to the feeling of betrayal, exploitation, and lack of love, it causes victims to have all aspects of their lives destroyed. The only way to fight it is through knowing the psychopath's mind and what they can do.

EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Emotional abuse, also known as psychological maltreatment, is a significant health problem. Long-term outcomes of emotional abuse are quite negative and include physical and mental health disorders. Vidourek (2017) examined emotional abuse and correlates to such abuse among college students. The American College Health Association–National College Health Assessment II was completed by study participants at one urban, Midwestern university. A total of 777 students participated in the survey. Greater than one in 10 (10.7%) students reported being emotionally abused in the past year. The final logistic regression model found being female, being an older student, recent marijuana use, and being so depressed it was difficult to function were significant predictors of emotional abuse. Study findings suggest it may be important to screen high-risk students for emotional abuse as part of mental health treatment or other medical screenings. Given that one in 10 students experienced past year emotional abuse, it may also be crucial to raise awareness of emotional abuse on college campuses.

The study by Karakurt and Silver (2013) aimed to investigate the moderating roles of gender and age on emotional abuse within intimate relationships. This study included 250 participants with an average age of 27 years. Participants completed the Emotional Abuse Questionnaire (EAQ; Jacobson and Gottman, 1998), whose four subscales are isolation, degradation, sexual abuse, and property damage. Multigroup analysis with two groups, female (n = 141) and male (n = 109), was used to test the moderation effect. Younger men reported experiencing higher levels of emotional abuse, which declined with age. Older females reported experiencing less emotional abuse than older males. Overall, emotional abuse was more common in younger participants. Younger women experienced higher rates of isolation, and women's overall experience of property damage was higher than that of men and increased with age. Results are interpreted through the Social Exchange and Conflict frameworks.

METHODOLOGY

Purpose

The aim is to study love bombing and emotional abuse among college students who are dating.

Method

Sample

A total sample of 45 young adults in the age group of 18-25 years was collected from the city Ludhiana.

Measures

The following standardized tools were used to measure love bombing and emotional abuse among college students.

Love Bombing Scale: The scale was developed based on previous literature regarding tendencies of narcissists in romantic relationships (Campbell, 1999; Campbell et al., 2002; Campbell & Foster, 2002; Foster et al., 2006; Oltmans et al., 2004) as well as assertions made by anecdotal accounts published to internet blogs. The scale was used to measure love bombing among young adults. The scale had a total of 8 items. The items were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Emotional Abuse: The scale as developed by Jacobson and Gottman (1998). The scale consisted of 28 items which assesses the level of emotional abuse of a person. The items were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (very often).

PROCEDURES

The participants were informed about the purpose of the research and the questionnaires were filled through Google forms, each participant was thanked for their cooperation. Standardized psychological tests were administered to the participants.

Analysis of Data

Results

Table 1: N, Mean and Standard Deviation

		Love bombing		Emotional Abuse	
N		45		45	
Mean		21.6		46.2	
Standard deviation		4.16		13.8	

Table 2: Correlation between love bombing and emotional abuse

	Love bombing		Emotional Abuse
Love bombing	—		
Emotional Abuse	0.078	—	
<i>Note. * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001</i>			

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The study aimed to investigate the relationship between love bombing and emotional abuse among people in situation ships and those who have been in a relationship for the past 6 months. The results found out that there is a positive relationship between Emotional abuse and Love bombing ($r=0.078$). However, the relationship was found to be insignificant.

In abusive contexts, love bombing is often seen as the first step in a pattern of establishing coercive control over another person (Fox, 2013). In this sense, a period of pure love bombing lasts until it has served its purpose. Once the emotional attachment has been formed, an abuser can shift toward using other behaviors to control the target of the love bombing. However, they may resort again to these manipulative displays of affection and attention if they sense the target is losing their dependency on the abuser. Coercive or manipulative love bombing serves a particular function (Vaknin, 2020). First, it sends a very clear message: “I care about you so much. I can’t stop thinking about you. I just want to make you happy.” Second, it creates an image of the love bomber as deeply caring, generous, and full of good intentions. Third, it immerses the love bomber and the recipient in an alternative reality where their truly special, unique love unites them—and, just as importantly, separates them from others. Finally, it teaches the recipient of the love bombing to expect these powerful displays of love: They have been conditioned to await these gestures and to respond to them positively. The stage is thus set for the love bomber to exercise control over the target of their manipulation.

Research by Iwaniec, Larkin, & Higgins (2006) examined risk and resilience in relation to emotional abuse. Research has identified numerous child and family factors that may increase the risk of emotional abuse occurring and has also identified numerous ways in which an experience of

emotional abuse can enhance vulnerability to negative outcomes. However, relatively little is known about the factors that determine the extent to which an experience of emotional abuse predicts later psychosocial functioning. Factors that may determine risk and resilience in children who experience emotional abuse are discussed. These include predisposing factors such as early caregiving experiences; precipitating factors such as the frequency, intensity and duration of the abuse; factors intrinsic to the child such as working models of the self and others, internal or external attributions, behavioral and coping strategies, self-esteem, and disposition; and external factors such as school and availability of supportive relationships. The need to pay attention to the particular vulnerabilities and protective factors pertaining to each emotionally abused child in order to most effectively enhance resilience is highlighted.

CONCLUSION

The research aimed to study love bombing and emotional abuse of people in a relationship and situation ship among college students. A sample of 45 college students in the age group of 18-25 years were taken. Standardized scales were used to measure love bombing and emotional abuse. Results found out that none of the results were significantly correlated. However, there was a positive correlation between love bombing and emotional abuse.

SUGGESTIONS

Love bombing often makes individuals initially question their true feelings, and the relationship may feel uncomfortable or overwhelming. Partners, family members, and friends should respect one's boundaries when asked. Confronting them about their behaviors and discussing setting boundaries when being love-bombed. Working through love-bombing behaviors and sticking to healthy boundaries may take some time, but it can heal a relationship. Keeping communication channels open to address any concerns calmly and directly. Seeking support from trusted friends, family, or professionals if needed. Education regarding healthy relationship dynamics is important. Seeking assistance from a mental health professional can provide valuable support in managing emotional turmoil arising from abuse or terminating relationships. Remember, healthy relationships are built on trust and mutual respect.

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A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON THE NEED FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION FOR ADHD STUDENTS AT THE COLLEGE LEVEL

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ABSTRACT

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder is one of the most common neurodevelopmental disorders. Earlier it was thought that this condition only lasts till adolescence, however, recent studies indicate that the symptom of the disorder persists into adulthood. Schools have been successful in introducing inclusive education, where all students no matter what kind of disability study together in one classroom. For the same reason schools have structure, continuous guidance and support for the students with ADHD but as they enter college, they either drop out or do not even enroll in higher education. Studies indicate that the poor academic performance at college level of students with ADHD can be due to the inability of these institutes to help these students. There is a need for inclusive education, continuous guidance, support and developing a more student centric approach even at college or university level to help the young adults with ADHD in a better way. This approach can be supported by various kinds of behavioral and pharmacotherapeutic interventions to increase the impact. Additionally, this all can help the students with their symptoms of ADHD like inattention, and lead to significant improvements in their academic performance.

Keywords: Inclusive Education, ADHD, University Students

INTRODUCTION

Indian college students with ADHD deal with serious issues that prevent them from succeeding academically and socially. Their inability to focus during lectures, manage their time well, and fulfill deadlines frequently results in subpar academic performance. These children's social isolation or misinterpretation by teachers and classmates might exacerbate their stress and anxiety. These difficulties are made worse by the dearth of specialized support services, such as academic accommodations and mental health resources. ADHD students have a higher chance of dropping out without the right therapies, which has an adverse effect on their general well-being and future employment opportunities. It is crucial to address these issues through inclusive education.

According to Abecassis, Isquith and Roth (2017) ADHD in emerging adults is associated with a variety of negative outcomes, including academic and occupational difficulties, social and relationship problems, and substance use disorders. Additionally, Wasserstein (2005) asserts that core childhood symptoms of hyperactivity, inattention, and impulsivity shift with development, meaning that symptoms may present differently in young adults than they do in children. One of the most important concerns about dealing with the issue is creating awareness about the cause training the teachers in identifying the symptoms and giving the required support to everyone.

Another concern that must be dealt with are the assumptions or myths surrounding the disability like students will ask for help when they need, these students are not interested to study, are happy with lower grades or are irresponsible. Some individuals even think that inclusive education may disturb other students in class, the tools used for special education are very expensive and keeping these students apart from mainstream classrooms is more effective (Hayes & Bulat, 2017). These myths must be catered to create a more progressive educational environment.

Yuval et al. (2004) invited faculty to incorporate a series of inclusive practices such as using digital and audio formats, books, notebooks, building teamwork, online tests, etc. The results of self-report questionnaires found that students who studied in classes that implement inclusive practices scored more on concentration in classrooms and examination, memory, understanding and describing ideas when compared to the groups who inculcated fewer inclusive methods of teaching.

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Inclusive education is when all students, regardless of any challenges they may have, are placed in age-appropriate general education classes that are in their neighborhood schools to receive high-quality instruction, interventions, and support that enable them to meet success in the core curriculum (Bui, et al., 2012)

According to UNESCO (1994), “Inclusion is seen as the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation, a process of addressing and responding to the learning, cultures, and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education” (Booth, 1996). It involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures, and strategies, with a common vision which covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children. Stainback (1992) adds that inclusion facilitates integration in school systems when general and special education personnel, as well as curriculum and instructional procedures, are combined to provide educational experiences to meet the needs of the students in an integrated setup. Inclusive education means creating a climate in class wherein all the educational necessities are addressed including the children with special needs (CWSN). Inclusion focuses not on treating the concern but on making every child feel like they are no less than their peers despite their disability. The child's differences are accepted and respected by everyone in the classroom. To help the students the regular education teachers work in collaboration with the special educators and counselors. This helps in developing and designing the curriculum, activities, and programs in such a way that each child can participate equally. The diversity among children with special needs may include academic, social, physical, emotional, or cognitive differences.

Making children with disabilities study in the mainstream classroom has proven to increase their achievement levels and develop better skills through inclusive teaching and in addition to this their classmates who do not have a disability benefit too (Bui, et al., 2010; Dupuis, et al., 2012)

ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER

ADHD is a developmental disorder associated with an ongoing pattern of inattention, hyperactivity, and/or impulsivity. The symptoms of ADHD can interfere significantly with an individual's daily activities and relationships. ADHD begins in childhood and can continue into the teen years and adulthood (NIMH, 2021). Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a “disorder of childhood and adolescence characterized by a pattern of extreme pervasive, persistent and debilitating inattention, overactivity and impulsivity” (Hoseini et al., 2014). Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder is one of the most prevalent childhood neurodevelopmental disorders. In this condition children generally struggle with focusing their attention on tasks, to sit still and control their behavior. The disorder is usually diagnosed in childhood only and often it continues in adulthood.

The diagnostic criteria of ADHD as explained in DSM V TR.

Inattention: Student generally fail to pay attention in the classroom and is easily distracted. The teachers generally complain that the child doesn't seem to listen when they are giving instructions. They find it difficult to complete tasks which include organization and avoid the activities which require them to sustain attention for a long time.

Hyperactivity and Impulsivity: Children who exhibit these symptoms generally fidget a lot, find it difficult to sit on the chair, and they may even squirm. These kids are generally defined as 'driven by motor' by people who observe them. They may blurt out answers in class, find it difficult to wait for their turn, fail to ask for permission to use something or interrupt while others are speaking.

The symptoms may be combined with each other or maybe present separately in some individuals. The severity of the disorder can be mild, moderate or severe. The disorder is present in both males and females, but the prevalence is reported more in the males. Though girls display more symptoms of inattention. But the research in this area has been limited as girls are referred less as compared to boys which leads to referral bias (Rucklidge, 2010). The symptoms of ADHD can have a serious negative effect on social relationships and academic achievement.

ADHD in Adults

Earlier it was thought that ADHD doesn't go beyond adolescence, but recent studies have proven that the symptoms of the disorder persist even in adulthood (Wilens, et al. 2004). As the individuals get older the symptoms might show some changes, like the adults can display restlessness, have anger issues, procrastinate their tasks, easily get bored of their routine, fail to be punctual or have problems in staying organized in their life (WebMD, 2024). Adults with ADHD may depict a few additional concerns such as being antisocial, high anxiety and depressive symptoms. Furthermore, they can experience lack of success at school, occupational issues and accidents. However, still there is a lot of uncertainty regarding the persistence of the disorder as the results of the follow up studies have been ambiguous (Faraone et al., 2000).

College Students and ADHD

A college student is a young adult who pursues higher education after completing their high school. Though the education institutions in India have offered huge support to children with ADHD by introducing measures like hiring counselors and special educators, giving them concessions such as scribe and extra time. This support is however only limited to schools. Because of this, these students have difficulty pursuing higher education and may choose to drop out of colleges and universities or fail to enroll themselves. A study reveals young adults in the UK and Ireland do not pursue further studies, even if they do they fail to graduate along with their peers. Though ADHD is associated with poor results in the academic front, it can also be due to the inability of the higher institutes to cater these students (Sedgwick, 2018)

Research was conducted on college health care professionals to understand their viewpoints regarding the students who suffer from ADHD. The study discovered that the professionals do realize the importance of treatment of ADHD, but they were uncomfortable while diagnosing and treating ADHD which acts as an obstacle in the care of college students (Thomas et al., 2014). Additionally, the problems of ADHD scholars increase at college level due to the lack of external structure and the rise in availability of immediate rewards, this makes it difficult for them to self-regulate their behavior. The children with ADHD are already vulnerable in this aspect of life (Fleming & McMahon, 2012).

Self-report study on college students with ADHD indicates that these students are more vulnerable to anxiety disorders and are at a risk of developing anxiety related symptoms. (O'Rourke et al., 2017) Another self-report-based study reported that the college students with ADHD symptoms have a need for having greater autonomy, more concentration and reasoning. They also faced difficulties in building relationships with classmates and there was little information provided by majors (de Oliveira & Dias, 2017).

INTERVENTIONS

For creating a supportive and equitable educational environment for college level students with ADHD there is a requirement for inclusive education. To help these students reach their potential, they need the right kind of help. This could lead to a better rate of enrollment of ADHD individuals in higher education institutes, reduce the dropout rates and positively impact their chances of getting employed in good companies.

As ADHD is now considered to be a lifespan concern, the academic difficulties faced by these students may continue up to young adulthood. Studies on college students discovered that behavioral and pharmacotherapeutic interventions can help the students with their inattention and improve their educational achievement (Prevatt & Young, 2014).

A study investigated the impact of support services on the GPA of college students with Learning disability (LD) and ADHD over a period of 5 years. The results revealed that children who opted for receiving coaching support, displayed improvement in their academics. Particularly learners with ADHD improved significantly in terms of GPA as a result of the help extended to them (DuPaul et al., 2017).

Research was conducted to study the effects of time management, organization skills and planning as an intervention for students with ADHD who displayed academic impairment, and the results were compared with another group who received no intervention. They were promised psychology course credit in exchange for their participation. The results discovered that the intervention group displayed significant improvement in terms of their ADHD symptoms and academic impairment as compared to the other group. The intervention also led to the refinement of their organization, time management, and planning skills relative to their baseline observations (LaCount et al., 2015).

The student-centered perspective in development can include coaching them with elements such as making use of open-ended questioning, building a safe space for students who face difficulties in regulation of their behavior and executive functions. The teachers can also use the approach of keeping these individuals accountable for their actions (D'Alessio & Banerjee, 2016).

Most of the colleges lack structure to help the students with ADHD to meet their academic goals. A comprehensive care model called "SUCCEEDS" which stands for "*Students Understanding College Choices: Encouraging and Executing Decisions for Success*" was initiated at college level. The results indicated that most of them experienced significant improvement in their organizational skills. In addition to this, the students who had comorbid symptoms such as depression or alcohol abuse at the baseline also reported some improvement (Meinzer et al., 2020).

To facilitate the students with disabilities at college level the institutions must work on their physical as well as nonphysical environment. The colleges must have proper management, physical space and architecture. The students must be allowed to interact freely and in a friendly manner with others who are not suffering from any disability to help build a student friendly ecosystem at their campus (Amka, 2018).

CONCLUSION

There is an urgent need to resolve the issue by offering the students with ADHD specialized assistance and accommodations at college level. The lecturers can offer support by giving them access to counseling, mentorship programs, helping them in goal setting, flexible deadlines, and individualized education. It is also very crucial to first sensitize the professors and staff to identify and address the needs of students with ADHD. Higher education institutes may foster a more sympathetic and compassionate academic environment by raising awareness and understanding about the cause.

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THE ECONOMICS OF TIME MANAGEMENT: MAXIMIZING PRODUCTIVITY AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING

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ABSTRACT

This chapter explores the intricate interplay between economic principles and psychological factors in the sphere of time management, particularly focusing on its significance within the context of college life. It elucidates the concept of opportunity cost, emphasizing the value of making informed decisions about how to allocate time resources amidst competing activities. Furthermore, it analyses the psychological dimensions influencing time perception and prioritization, such as motivation and cognitive biases. Practical time budgeting strategies, including time blocking and priority setting, are discussed, alongside an examination of the psychological impacts of technology on attention and well-being. By integrating economic principles with psychological insights, this study advocates for a balanced and intentional approach to time management for enhanced productivity and fulfilment. Through empirical analysis and theoretical frameworks, it seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the complexities involved in optimizing time usage and achieving success in academic, personal, and social domains, both during college and beyond.

Keywords: Time Management, Opportunity Cost, Psychological Factors, College Life

INTRODUCTION

Understanding the Value of Time in College Life

Time in college life is crucial as it dictates academic success, personal growth, social connections, and long-term outcomes. Each moment carries importance, whether spent on academics, exploring interests, or nurturing relationships. The concept of opportunity cost highlights the need for informed decision-making, as every allocation of time involves trade-offs. Recognizing the significance of time in college extends beyond the present, shaping future opportunities and trajectories. In essence, time in college is not merely spent but invested, with each moment contributing to a holistic and transformative educational experience.

The intersection of economics and psychology in time management examines how individuals allocate scarce time resources based on economic principles and psychological factors. Economic concepts such as opportunity cost, efficiency, and resource allocation influence decision-making about time usage. Meanwhile, psychological factors like motivation, self-control, and cognitive biases shape how individuals perceive and manage their time. Understanding this intersection involves recognizing how economic principles inform rational time allocation while acknowledging the psychological complexities that impact behaviour. By integrating these disciplines, individuals can develop strategies that optimize productivity, enhance well-being, and achieve a balance between academic, personal, and social commitments in college and beyond.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Ahmady et al. (2021) synthesized evidence from 94 articles to elucidate the pivotal roles of time management and stress in academic failure. Through meta-analysis, a significant negative correlation (-0.32) between stress and academic performance was established, underscoring the urgent need for

interventions. The absence of publication bias enhanced the credibility of the findings, while the inclusion of eight educational intervention studies highlights promising strategies to enhance time management skills and alleviate stress. This study underscores the importance of addressing these modifiable factors to promote student success in academia.

Dhanabhakya et al. (2023) analysed multifaceted concept of psychological well-being, highlighting its significance in promoting overall health and happiness. By exploring various components such as life satisfaction, positive emotions, and personal growth, the review shows the interconnectedness of these factors and their impact on individuals' subjective experiences. It emphasized the importance of addressing multiple facets of psychological well-being simultaneously to foster resilience and enhance overall quality of life. This comprehensive understanding offers valuable insights for practitioners and policymakers seeking to develop effective interventions that support individuals in their pursuit of holistic well-being.

Au et al. (2023) examined the intricate relationship between various factors—sense of belonging, resilience, time management skills, academic performance, and psychological well-being—among university students. Findings highlight the significant predictive power of resilience on psychological well-being, with both resilience and time management skills emerging as key predictors of environmental mastery and autonomy. However, time management skills appear to outweigh resilience in predicting autonomy. The study showed the importance of considering contextual factors, such as academic pressure, in understanding these relationships, while also emphasizing the need for experimental studies to discern causal relationships and inform interventions aimed at enhancing psychological well-being among students.

Diaconu-Gherasim (2023) meta-analysis investigated the relationship between Zimbardo and Boyd's time perspectives and well-being, encompassing positive and negative indicators. Results revealed various associations: past negative time perspective correlates negatively with positive well-being indicators and positively with negative ones, while the past positive perspective shows the reverse pattern. Present fatalist perspective exhibits negative associations with all positive indicators and positive correlations with negative ones, contrasting with the present hedonist perspective, which is positively linked to well-being measures. Future time perspective demonstrates positive correlations with positive indicators and negative correlations with negative ones. Furthermore, deviations from a balanced time perspective are associated with adverse well-being outcomes. The study also examined the influence of age, cultural context, and methodological factors on these associations, highlighting practical implications for interventions aimed at enhancing individuals' well-being.

Osin et al. (2024) introduced a novel concept of positive time use, comprising self-congruence, balance, efficiency, and mastery over daily activities, derived from qualitative interviews. Through the development and validation of the Positive Time Use Inventory (PTUI) using data from two UK adult samples, the study establishes the structural and convergent validity of the measure. Results demonstrated correlation between positive time use and balanced time perspective, affect balance, life satisfaction, and sense of coherence, supporting its validity. Furthermore, positive time use partially mediates the relationship between time perspectives, time management, and subjective well-being, offering a comprehensive framework for understanding temporal well-being and informing interventions aimed at enhancing time management practices.

Wang et al. (2018) investigated the impact of time management training on anxiety, depression, and sleep quality among premenopausal women. Conducted in Wuhan, China, the experimental group underwent a 6-month time management training program, while the control group received no intervention. Results indicate significant improvements in anxiety, depression, sleep quality, and time management disposition in the experimental group compared to controls. The findings underscore the

potential of time management training as a valuable intervention to alleviate negative emotions and enhance subjective well-being among premenopausal women.

Adams and Blair (2019) explored the influence of time management behaviours on the academic performance of undergraduate engineering students. Through a quantitative study, they investigate the relationship between time management strategies and students' GPA. Their findings suggest a significant positive correlation between effective time management behaviors and academic performance. This study contributes valuable insights into the importance of time management skills in fostering success among engineering students, highlighting the need for interventions to enhance these skills within academic contexts.

Alhasani et al. (2022) investigated the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health of higher education students, focusing on their perceptions and attitudes towards time management. Through structural equation modelling (SEM) analysis involving 502 participants, the research reveals associations between stress, anxiety, and specific time management factors. Results suggest that students' preference for organization significantly contributes to reducing stress and anxiety by enhancing perceived control over time. Gender and degree level differences are also noted, with female and graduate students reporting higher levels of stress and anxiety. The study proposes persuasive strategies mapped to organizational preferences, offering insights for developing technological interventions to support students' mental well-being through effective time management.

Fredrick (2022) explored the potential correlation between time management skills and mental health, aiming to draw insightful parallels rather than quantitative conclusions. The author reflects on the importance of effective time management in mitigating stress and enhancing overall well-being, particularly in academic settings where the demands are high. Through the process, the author gains personal insights into time management and stress management, highlighting the need for improved awareness and skills in navigating daily responsibilities. This study highlights the significance of integrating effective time management strategies to promote mental health and academic success.

Chaudhry et al. (2024) investigates the impact of team-related factors and support structures on academic engagement and psychological well-being among management students in India. Findings suggest that internal team environment and institutional and family support positively influence academic engagement and well-being, with academic engagement mediating this relationship. However, friend support exhibits a negative association with engagement and no significant relation with well-being. While the study offers valuable insights into the interplay between teamwork, support systems, academic engagement, and well-being, further research is warranted to ascertain the generalizability of these findings across different educational domains and cultural contexts beyond India.

THE OPPORTUNITY COST OF TIME

Opportunity cost in the context of time management refers to the value of the next best alternative foregone when a particular choice is made about how to spend one's time. It represents the benefits or opportunities sacrificed by choosing one activity over another. For example, if a student decides to spend time studying for an exam instead of attending a social event, the opportunity cost is the enjoyment and social interaction they could have experienced at the event. Understanding opportunity cost helps individuals make informed decisions about how to allocate their time effectively, considering the trade-offs between competing activities and maximizing the overall value gained from their time investment.

Economics frames time as a resource by quantifying its value based on the principles of scarcity, utility, and opportunity cost. Time, like any other resource, is finite and limited, making it inherently valuable. Economists analyze time as a scarce resource, recognizing that individuals must make choices about how to allocate it among competing activities. The value of time is determined by its utility or the satisfaction derived from its use, whether it's spent on work, leisure, education, or other pursuits. Additionally, economics emphasizes opportunity cost, highlighting the value of the next best alternative foregone when time is allocated to a particular activity. By viewing time through an economic lens, individuals can better understand its importance, prioritize effectively, and make optimal decisions to maximize their overall well-being and productivity.

Perceived value plays a crucial role in influencing time allocation, with significant psychological implications. Individuals often prioritize activities based on their perceived importance, enjoyment, or perceived benefits, rather than solely on objective measures of utility or opportunity cost. Psychological factors such as motivation, emotions, and cognitive biases influence how individuals perceive the value of different activities. For example, tasks perceived as more enjoyable or aligned with personal interests are often given higher priority, even if they may not be the most productive use of time. Moreover, individuals tend to overvalue immediate rewards and undervalue long-term benefits, leading to procrastination and suboptimal time allocation. This phenomenon, known as temporal discounting, can hinder long-term goals and productivity. Understanding these psychological implications is essential for effective time management. By recognizing how perceived value influences decision-making, individuals can employ strategies to overcome biases, enhance motivation, and prioritize activities that align with their long-term goals and overall well-being.

TIME BUDGETING STRATEGIES

Budgeting basics in time management involve applying economic principles to allocate time efficiently and effectively. Just as financial budgets allocate limited resources among competing needs, time budgets prioritize activities based on their importance and impact. This process involves several key economic principles:

Scarcity: Recognizing that time is finite and limited, individuals must prioritize how to allocate their time among various tasks and activities.

Opportunity Cost: Understanding that choosing one activity over another incurs the opportunity cost of forgoing the benefits of the next best alternative. Time spent on one task cannot be used for another, so it's essential to consider the trade-offs involved in each decision.

Resource Allocation: Similar to financial resources, time must be allocated strategically to maximize utility and achieve desired outcomes. This involves allocating time based on the relative importance and urgency of different tasks.

Efficiency: Striving to achieve the maximum output or benefit from the time invested. This may involve optimizing workflows, minimizing distractions, and utilizing time-saving tools and techniques.

Flexibility: Recognizing that unforeseen circumstances may arise, necessitating adjustments to the time budget. Flexibility allows individuals to adapt to changing priorities and allocate time accordingly.

By applying these economic principles to time management, individuals can make informed decisions about how to allocate their time, prioritize effectively, and achieve their goals efficiently.

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF PLANNING: COGNITIVE APPROACHES TO TIME MANAGEMENT

The psychology of planning analyses cognitive approaches to time management, understanding how individuals process information, set goals, and execute tasks. Cognitive psychology highlights several key principles that inform effective planning:

Goal Setting: Setting clear, achievable goals is essential for effective time management. Goals provide direction, motivation, and a framework for organizing tasks. Utilizing techniques such as SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) help individuals establish concrete objectives and track progress.

Time Perception: People's perception of time can vary based on factors such as attention, motivation, and emotional state. Understanding individual differences in time perception can help individuals better estimate how long tasks will take and allocate time accordingly.

Task Prioritization: Cognitive approaches to time management emphasize the importance of prioritizing tasks based on their importance and urgency. Techniques such as Eisenhower's Urgent/Important Principle help individuals distinguish between tasks that are important but not urgent, urgent but not important, both urgent and important, or neither urgent nor important, allowing for more effective prioritization.

Chunking and Organization: Breaking tasks into smaller, manageable chunks enhances productivity and reduces cognitive overload. Organizing tasks into categories or using visual aids such as to-do lists, calendars, and project management tools helps individuals structure their time and maintain focus.

Time Management Strategies: Cognitive-behavioural strategies such as time blocking, Pomodoro Technique (working in focused intervals with short breaks), and implementation intentions (specifying when, where, and how tasks will be completed) help individuals manage their time more effectively by promoting focus, productivity, and self-regulation.

By understanding the cognitive processes underlying time management, individuals can implement strategies that align with their cognitive strengths and weaknesses, leading to more efficient planning, execution, and goal attainment.

TECHNIQUES FOR EFFECTIVE TIME BUDGETING

Techniques for effective time budgeting encompass a range of strategies aimed at maximizing productivity and prioritizing tasks. Here are two key techniques:

Time Blocking: Time blocking involves scheduling specific blocks of time for different activities or tasks throughout the day. By allocating dedicated time slots for each task, individuals can focus their attention and energy on completing them without interruption. This technique helps prevent multitasking and ensures that important tasks receive adequate attention. Additionally, time blocking allows individuals to visualize their daily schedule, identify potential conflicts, and make adjustments as needed.

Priority Setting: Priority setting involves identifying and ranking tasks based on their importance and urgency. Techniques such as Eisenhower's Urgent/Important Principle or the ABCDE method help individuals prioritize tasks effectively. Urgent and important tasks are given the highest priority and should be addressed first, while less urgent or important tasks can be deferred or delegated. Setting priorities allows individuals to focus their efforts on tasks that align with their goals and have the greatest impact, thereby maximizing productivity and achieving desired outcomes.

By incorporating these techniques into their time management approach, individuals can enhance their ability to allocate time efficiently, prioritize effectively, and accomplish tasks in a systematic and organized manner.

PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The impact of technology on attention, focus, and well-being is a crucial psychological consideration in the context of time management. Technology affects the following aspects:

Attention Span: Technology, especially smartphones and social media, can fragment attention and reduce individuals' ability to sustain focus on a single task for extended periods. Constant notifications, alerts, and the lure of endless scrolling can hijack attention and lead to decreased productivity.

Cognitive Overload: The constant influx of information from various digital sources can overwhelm cognitive resources, leading to cognitive overload. Multitasking, a common consequence of technology use, can impair cognitive performance and increase stress levels.

Digital Distraction: Technology offers a wealth of entertainment and diversionary options, making it easy for individuals to succumb to digital distractions. These distractions can interrupt workflow, decrease productivity, and impede goal attainment.

Impacts on Well-being: Excessive use of technology, particularly social media, has been linked to negative impacts on mental health and well-being. Comparison with others, fear of missing out (FOMO), and the pressure to maintain a curated online presence can contribute to feelings of anxiety, depression, and loneliness.

Attention Restoration: On the other hand, technology can also offer opportunities for attention restoration and stress reduction. Mindfulness apps, relaxation techniques, and nature sound playlists can help individuals disconnect from digital distractions and restore cognitive resources.

Digital Detox: Recognizing the adverse effects of technology on attention, focus, and well-being, many individuals are turning to digital detox practices. Periodic unplugging from digital devices and intentional engagement in offline activities can promote mindfulness, presence, and overall well-being.

Intentional Technology Use: Ultimately, the key lies in intentional and mindful use of technology. By setting boundaries, establishing digital routines, and cultivating awareness of how technology impacts attention, focus, and well-being, individuals can harness its benefits while mitigating its drawbacks.

Understanding these psychological considerations is essential for effective time management in the digital age. By adopting strategies to mitigate the negative impacts of technology and leverage its potential for enhancing attention, focus, and well-being, individuals can optimize their use of time and achieve greater productivity and satisfaction in their daily lives.

TIME AS A SCARCE RESOURCE: BALANCING WORK, STUDY, AND LIFE

By integrating economic principles such as opportunity cost, resource allocation, and scarcity with psychological factors like motivation, attention, and well-being, we gain a comprehensive understanding of the complexities involved in managing their time. We can explore how cognitive biases, emotional influences, and individual differences impact time management decisions, offering practical techniques to mitigate these challenges.

As we peer into the future, we recognize both the promise and the perils that lie ahead. The rapid pace of technological innovation presents unprecedented opportunities for efficiency and productivity, yet

it also poses challenges such as information overload and digital distractions. In this ever-evolving landscape, the key to success lies in our ability to adapt, innovate, and maintain a steadfast focus on our priorities. By harnessing the insights gleaned from economics and psychology, we can forge a path forward that is both pragmatic and compassionate. As we embark on this journey, let us remember that time is not merely a resource to be managed, but a precious gift to be treasured. May we use it wisely, with intention and purpose, to create a life of meaning and significance.

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A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF MENTAL HEALTH STIGMA AND HELP SEEKING AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS.

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ABSTRACT

Mental health issues are prevalent among college students in India. College students face the highest risk as per studies. The current chapter aimed to analyze the causes of stigma, factors affecting help seeking and possible interventions to combat stigma and induce seeking care. A comprehensive literature search was carried out. Data was gathered from Google Scholar, PubMed, PsycINFO and Scopus. The studies (45 sources) consisted of qualitative, quantitative, cross-sectional, systematic reviews, experimental, empirical papers, grey literature and interviews from professionals. Gender and prior exposure have an effect on stigma and help seeking. Steps to reduce stigma among students include facilitating contact between the neurodivergent and neurotypical, phrases used with regards to mental health and contact based interventions. Stigma leads to reduced help seeking. Other factors that influence help seeking were fear of labels, victims blamed for their predicament, self-efficacy, distrust of Mental Health Professionals (MHPs), and lack of mental health literacy, lack of accessibility, economic burden and denial. Introduction of mental health screening kiosks and Mental health first aid was found to be positive step. There is a gap in the policies regarding mental health and their implementation. Proper allocation of funds for mental health initiatives in college campuses and conception of projects targeting students to promote mental health literacy and equip students to combat suicide have been elaborated upon.

Keywords: Mental Health, Mental Health Stigma, Help Seeking For Mental Health, College Students, Barriers for Help Seeking

INTRODUCTION

Mental health issues are prevalent in approximately 10% of the total world population, with neuropsychiatric (10.9%) and depression (5%) being the most debilitating conditions. College students make up huge chunk of people suffering from depression, anxiety and substance abuse. A data of 2018 revealed that almost 10,000 students per year succumb to suicide. Mental health concerns among college students have increased compared to a decade ago. Many students have pre-existing mental health concerns. The most reported distress was related to interpersonal relationships, which took a shift post 1994. A significant increase in relationship issues, stress, personality disorders, suicidal thoughts and anxiety could be observed from 1988 till 1999. These issues were relatively stable post 1996 till 2001. Depression, grief and academic related problems saw a substantial rise from 1988 to 2001 (APA, 2003) Students display active willingness to seek counselling. Increasing number of college students have sought counselling in the past to address their mental health concern. Williamson observed a need for help required by college students in terms of their academics and career. Counselling centers were conceptualized in 1940s when students were helped by teachers regarding their academic related problems. (Mental Health Issues in College on the Rise, 2013).

METHODOLOGY

A rigorous systematic search was done to ascertain the prevalence of mental health and stigma surrounding it among college students in India and across the world. Additionally, help seeking and

barriers faced by students on campus and off campus was also looked at. To understand knowledge, perceptions and attitudes held by college students towards people suffering from mental health issues, relevant publications were navigated. Databases that were used to navigate through were PubMed, Google Scholar, PsycINFO and Scopus. In order to narrow down on relevant studies, appropriate keywords (*mental health stigma, stigma among college students, barriers to mental health help seeking, policies and procedures to increase help seeking for Mental health*) were used. Relevant research papers found in the reference list of the original paper were considered for match with the inclusion criteria. Research papers published between the time period of 1998 till 2023 were included for review. Initially 143 papers, articles and other literature sources were analyzed regarding the required information. Studies related to mental health in general, stigma faced by patients in psychiatric institutions, mental illness among population above the age of 25 were excluded and only those papers were included which presented information on mental health stigma faced by college students and the barriers faced by them in help seeking for their mental health problems. Additionally, studies displaying research about perceived stigma faced by students and stigmatized attitudes possessed by students towards their peers suffering from a mental illness were included. Research papers involve cross-sectional studies, quantitative research, qualitative papers, systematic reviews, experimental research and empirical research paper. Furthermore, interviews with professionals and grey literature articles were also incorporated.

RESULTS

Knowledge and Awareness

Female students had high mental health literacy (Siddique et al., 2022) when compared to males who exhibited less knowledge and high stigma. Additionally, students who had good mental health had low mental health literacy. However, male students were more open to communication and the idea of marrying someone with a MH issue (Agarwal, Singh & Kataria, 2016). Many misconceptions surround mental health problems among young population. Support for social isolation, severe punishments and beating as a form of cure was found. Additionally, many students perceived attention seeking to be a driving factor for mental health issues (Nayak & Issac, 2014). Students also attributed infections and food choices as causation for mental illness. Students' attitude towards treatment effectiveness was low (Gaiha et al., 2020). Few students believed that mental illness can only be cured by drugs and hospitalization. On the contrary others opined medications can cause addiction therefore were against prescription of medications (Zolezzi et al., 2017)

Stigma

Mental illness is attributed to dangerous behavior (Zolezzi et al., 2017), violence (Seeman et al., 2016), irresponsible, lack of hygiene, little job-related skills, lack of willpower (Nebhinani et al., 2013) and lack of credibility in India. The sufferer is blamed for their predicament along-with attaching phrases such as difficult to talk to and unpredictable (Bell et al., 2009). Majority of student population regard suicide to be impulsive, deliberate and an act of cowardice (Etzersdorfer et al., 1998). Opening up about suicide was considered to perpetuate suicide (Ram et al., 2017) This leads to resistance in talking about suicidal thoughts. Attitudes were not favorable towards substance use victims and people suffering from acute mental illness (Gaiha et al., 2020) In research conducted on nursing students, many agreed to mental illness as a factor for divorce (Vijayalakshmi et al., 2013). Other studies indicated support towards exclusion of patients from decision making regarding their treatment options (Poreddi et al., 2013) A study indicated that students were ashamed of family history of mental illness and opined that the mentally ill can't hold regular jobs (Zolezzi et al., 2017).

Help Seeking: Barriers and Facilitators

Factors that act as major barriers are Stigma (perceived, personal), high costs, lack of proper access to facilities, low mental health literacy and shortage of essential resources required for effective treatment (Thornicroft et al., 2023). Cultural factors, preference to self-diagnose and inclination towards informal consultation also play a key role. Students have a fear of being labelled if they openly seek treatment (Ebert et al., 2019). Distrust towards on campus counsellors was also a contributing aspect (Ning et al., 2022). Social, peer support, high literacy, females have been found to encourage help seeking. (Dong et al., 2022).

A hypothetical situation was presented where a teenager was having symptoms of moderate depression and suicidal ideation. Majority of the respondents felt professional treatment was not required, suggested informal consultations. (Sameed et al., 2016). Studies suggested that college students with suicide ideation in the previous year displayed low intentions to seek help in the future (Arria et al., 2011).

Paediatric residents displayed high perceived stigma. They believed that they won't be hired if the hiring panel got information about them seeking treatment for any mental health issue (Weiss et al., 2021). It is noteworthy that public stigma leads to personal stigma which acts as a huge barrier to seeking treatment for their mental illness (Hilliard et al., 2022). However, contact and education interventions resulted in decreased personal stigma and increase in help seeking (Kosyluk et al., 2016).

DISCUSSION

Arthur Evans, faculty at university of Pennsylvania was interviewed in 2015 to dive deep into health stigma and steps taken to enable help seeking. The interview followed mental health stigma among inhabitants of Philadelphia and procedures incorporated to deal with stigma. In order to facilitate help seeking, mental health screening kiosks have been installed in retail pharmacies. This encourages individuals to get feedback on symptoms of mental illness. Mental health professionals engaged in community screenings and education were perceived as more approachable. The Obama administration introduced the affordable care act which makes mental health care easily accessible. Suicide hotlines operate to aid during an emergency psychiatric crisis. Additionally, websites (healthymindsPhilly, Philadelphia) are formulated that contain informative content on mental health first aid and accessibility to services (Aurthur & Evans, 2015).

Cardigan (2022), discussed mental health stigma and steps to fight it. Lack of mental health literacy gives rise to speculations but merely educating on mental health has been proven to be ineffective. However, contact based interventions are more effective. In Canada, individuals who have experienced mental health issues are hired to talk to community leaders on stigma which aids in sensitizing them and eliminating stigma to some extent. To encourage people to open up on their mental health, anti-stigma project; honest, open, proud has been initiated by Dr Patrick Corrigan and his team. This initiative assists people to take control of the who, where and how they want to open up on their mental health. The project can be accessed on HOPProject.org and has been adapted across 12 different cultures and countries (Mills & Corrigan, 2022). Faculty training for Mental health recognition, prevention and intervention must be incorporated in schools and colleges. Mental health holiday can prove beneficial for students (Mental Health Issues in College on the Rise, 2013).

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A STUDY ON PARENTAL ATTACHMENT AND EMERGING ADULTHOOD AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

The parent-child relationship in Indian culture is deeply rooted in traditions, values, and familial bonds, with family often being considered the cornerstone of society. Emerging adulthood, a developmental stage proposed by psychologist Jeffrey Arnett, typically spans from the late teens through the twenties. It is characterized by exploration, identity formation, instability, and self-focus as individuals transition from adolescence to full adulthood. This study aims to investigate the relationship between parental attachment and emerging adulthood among Indian college students aged 18 to 25 years. Standardized scales were administered to 50 college students to assess their attachment style with parents, including safe, dependent, parentified, fearful, and distant. Additionally, five dimensions of emerging adulthood were evaluated, namely: (a) age of feeling in-between, (b) period of identity exploration, (c) time of self-focus, (d) age of possibilities, and (e) age of instability. Preliminary findings indicate a significant correlation between parental attachment and emerging adulthood. These results underscore the importance of social and emotional support, particularly for individuals who have not felt safe in their parental relationships. Recommendations include lifestyle adjustments and the development of a strong social support system to navigate this transitional period, effectively.

Keywords: Parental Attachment, Emerging Adulthood, College Students

INTRODUCTION

Attachment theory offers profound insights into the intricate dynamics shaping human relationships, particularly within the familial context. Central to this theory is the notion that early experiences of attachment with primary caregivers significantly influence individuals' socio-emotional development across their lifespan (Freud, 1920). Among the myriad transitions marking the journey from adolescence to adulthood, the phase of emerging adulthood emerges as a critical period characterized by exploration, identity formation, and increasing autonomy (Arnett, 2000). Within this framework, the parent-child attachment bond continues to exert a profound impact, shaping individuals' perceptions of self, others, and their place in the world (Bowlby, 1969).

According to Matsumoto (1999), in societies like India, where family plays a central role, individuals often find their life choices influenced by societal norms. Unlike many Western cultures, particularly those of the middle class, Asian cultures emphasize interconnectedness rather than individual independence. With an interdependent self-construal, Indians typically shape their actions in response to and in consideration of the expectations of others. South Asian culture is characterised as hierarchical, with limited scope for personal autonomy (Wider et al., 2016). According to a study conducted across 33 nations, India scored relatively high at 11 ($M = 6.5$) on the tight-loose culture scale, indicating a culture that imposes significant constraints, particularly restricting autonomy in various behaviours and social contexts (Gelfand et al., 2011). Moreover, with the rise of Generation Z (born approximately between the mid-1990s and early 2010s), characterized by their digital nativism and global connectedness, the dynamics of parent-child attachment are further nuanced (Twenge & Campbell, 2018). The rapid economic and social transformations occurring in India are likely

influencing how emerging adults prioritize and engage in tasks. Particularly within the urban and suburban middle-class segments of Indian society, there is an ongoing transition in the sociocultural landscape. Embedded in a postcolonial, euro-centric cultural milieu, Indian youth are navigating and reshaping notions of self and identity amidst this evolving context (Bhatia, 2017).

Over recent years, there has been a noticeable increase in nuclear family structures in India, resulting in shifts in family dynamics that afford greater scope for negotiation within parent-child relationships during decision-making processes (Bansal et al., 2014). Additionally, urbanization trends in India have spurred a significant migration of young individuals to major cities in pursuit of educational and employment opportunities (Mittra & Arnett, 2021). Seiter and Nelson (2011) suggested that as access to higher education and lucrative career prospects expands, emerging adults in India may increasingly experience levels of autonomy in decision-making akin to those observed in developed nations. Notably, while research on emerging adulthood has been extensively conducted in developed countries, its investigation in developing nations like India remains relatively underrepresented.

PARENTAL ATTACHMENT

Attachment theory, as proposed by Bowlby (1969), provides a theoretical framework for understanding how early caregiver interactions shape individuals' internal working models of relationships. According to Bowlby, the quality of attachment formed with primary caregivers influences individuals' emotional and relational experiences throughout the lifespan. It emphasizes the importance of secure caregiver-child relationships in promoting healthy development and later well-being (Van Rosmalen & Van Der Horst, 2016). This theory posits that responsive and nurturing caregiving fosters a positive sense of self and trust in others, while neglect or unavailability can lead to negative outcomes such as low self-worth and fear of abandonment (Wright & Perrone, 2010). Therefore, it is necessary to understand individuals' emotional health and behaviour across the lifespan.

Bowlby and Ainsworth's attachment theories, though served as foundational theories in psychology, initially focused on two primary factors: care and protection. However, recent research has expanded this theory, with Michael and Snow (2019) emphasizing a multidimensional approach. Rather than categorizing individuals into distinct groups, they introduced five dimensions of attachment, allowing for the possibility of high scores across multiple patterns. This perspective recognizes the complexity of the parent-child relationship, which encompasses various interacting dimensions. The Adult Scale of Parental Attachment – Short Form (ASPA-SF) was developed to efficiently assess these dimensions retrospectively, streamlining data collection. The dimensions identified were as follows: "Safe" pertaining to perceived warmth and safety, "Dependent" reflects the child's lack of autonomy in the parent's absence, "Parentified" denotes the child's sense of responsibility for parental needs, "Fearful" characterizes relationships where the child's need for support isn't met, and "Distant" describes relationships lacking parental support and attention (Michael & Snow, 2019).

EMERGING ADULTHOOD

According to various scholars, individuals in their late teens and early twenties are characterized as being in a transitional phase between adolescence and full adulthood, where aspects of both stages present (Macek et al., 2007). While psychosocial differences related to socioeconomic status and ethnicity exist among emerging adults, overarching terms and general descriptions are still valuable for understanding this developmental period (Arnett, 2006).

Arnett(2001) suggests that emerging adulthood, as described by Erikson's psychosocial moratorium, is a period characterized by identity exploration. It's a phase where individuals feel caught between adolescence and full adulthood, with a sense of optimism about the various opportunities available to

them, such as relationships, careers, and social causes. This exploration coincides with a growing sense of independence and responsibility, although complete autonomy is not yet achieved, as seen in the example of college students who experience a degree of freedom while still being financially supported by their parents (Arnett, 2007). This phase is also marked by a focus on self-development and the acquisition of skills necessary for adult life. However, alongside these positive aspects, emerging adulthood can also bring feelings of being overwhelmed due to the multitude of choices and uncertainties, leading to a sense of instability (Robbins & Wilner, 2001).

In the current study, the focus is on the Adult Scale of Parental Attachment (ASPA) to assess participants' perceptions of parental attachment, specifically examining dimensions such as Safe, Dependent, Parentified, Fearful, and Distant patterns of relating to both maternal and paternal figures. Furthermore, the Inventory of Dimensions of Emerging Adulthood (IDEA) is used to explore the multifaceted nature of emerging adulthood, as conceptualized by Arnett (2000). The aim of the study is to deepen our understanding of how parental attachment patterns may be associated with individuals' experiences of emerging adulthood. Through an examination of the associations between ASPA dimensions and IDEA subscales, the research seeks to elucidate the interplay between early attachment experiences and the developmental tasks of emerging adulthood. The research contributes to the growing body of literature on attachment theory and emerging adulthood, especially in the Indian context which is characterized with diversity and cultural differences, highlighting the enduring influence of early caregiver relationships on individuals' psychological well-being and relational functioning.

METHODOLOGY

Purpose

The purpose is to study parental attachment and emerging adulthood among college students.

Sample

A total sample of 64 college students in the age group 18-25 years was collected from New Delhi.

Measures

Adult Scale of Parental Attachment: Short Form (ASPA-SF)

The Adult Scale of Parental Attachment Short Form is a 40-item inventory designed to measure adult children's relationship with their parents (Michael & Snow, 2019). The items are rated on a Likert Scale from 1(never) to 5(constantly). The ASPA-SF includes a five-factor subscale that aims to measure attachment dimensions between both mother and father figures in childhood. The five factors include safe, dependent, parentified, fearful, and distant patterns of relating.

Inventory of the Dimensions of Emerging Adulthood

The Inventory of the Dimensions of Emerging Adulthood is a 31 item scale that measures the transition to adulthood and perceptions towards it among young adults (Reifman & Arnett, 2002). The items are rated on a Likert Scale from 1(Strongly disagree) to 4(Strongly Agree). It has five factors including identity exploration, experimentation/possibilities, negativity/instability, self-focus and other-focus.

Open Ended Question

The question put forth on the google form before the participants to enquire about their experiences was "What does adulting feel like to you?"

PROCEDURE

A Google Form survey was used to collect quantitative data consisting of responses to standardized scales, ensuring structured questions for numerical analysis. An open-ended question in the survey was administered to gather qualitative insights, allowing participants to provide detailed responses for qualitative analysis. The participants were assured of confidentiality and thanked for their participation.

Results

Table 1: N, Mean & Standard Deviation

	MSafe	MFearful	MDependent	MInstant	MParentified	FSafe	FFearful	FParentified	FDistant	FDependent	Identity Exploration	Experimentation/Possibilities	Negativity/Instability	Self Focused	Feeling In-between	Other Focused
N	63	63	63	63	63	63	63	63	63	62	63	63	63	63	63	63
Mean	12.7	8.92	11.2	11.1	11.1	9.4	8.52	8.27	12.0	9.4	10.6	23.8	17.1	20.6	20.6	9.11
Standard deviation	4.22	3.47	3.91	4.26	3.35	4.72	3.77	3.87	3.16	4.17	4.04	3.68	3.19	4.59	3.42	2.15

Table 2: Correlation Matrix

	MSafe	MFearful	MDependent	MInstant	MParentified	FSafe	FFearful	FParentified	FDistant	FDependent	Identity Exploration	Experimentation/Possibilities	Negativity/Instability	Self Focused	Feeling In-between	Other Focused
MSafe	—															
MFearful	0.028	—														
MDependent	0.596	0.461	—													
MInstant	-0.3	0.62	0.17	—												

[illegible]

[illegible]

		Statistic		df	p
MSafe	Student's t	1.230		61.0	0.223
MFearful	Student's t	-1.743		61.0	0.086
MDependent	Student's t	-0.494		61.0	0.623
MDistant	Student's t	-1.832	^a	61.0	0.072
MParentified	Student's t	1.033		61.0	0.306
FSafe	Student's t	0.814	^a	61.0	0.419
FFearful	Student's t	-1.216		61.0	0.229
FParentified	Student's t	0.232		61.0	0.818
FDistant	Student's t	-1.184		61.0	0.241
FDependent	Student's t	-1.518		61.0	0.134
Identity Exploration	Student's t	-1.363		61.0	0.178
Experimentation/Possibilities	Student's t	-1.175		61.0	0.245
Negativity/Instability	Student's t	-1.083		61.0	0.283
Self-Focused	Student's t	-0.597		61.0	0.552
Feeling In-between	Student's t	0.436		61.0	0.664
Other-Focused	Student's t	-0.623		61.0	0.536
<i>Note.</i> H _a $\mu_{\text{Non-Attendee}} \neq \mu_{\text{Attendee}}$					

Thematic Analysis: Emerging Adulthood among College Students Exemplifying Quotes, Subthemes and Themes

Exemplifying Quotes	Sub themes	Theme
Full of optimism and confusion	Confusion	Ambiguity and Stress
Adulting feels like a phase of confusion and uncertainty where you're learning about yourself, your identity, questioning your own beliefs and making a sense of who you really are. You're learning to be financially, physically, mentally independent. You get to "experience" life. It's like coming out of auto pilot, it's not easy but somehow exciting. To me, it feels like I've been reborn and now I am learning how to be.	Confusion	Ambiguity and Stress
Being lost	Emotional dysregulation	Ambiguity and Stress
Responsibilities and stressful life	Emotional dysregulation	Ambiguity and stress
It is too much of anxious experience for me with a lot of confusions	Emotional dysregulation	Ambiguity and stress
It's hard to be an adult, people expect me to behave wise without being wiser than them, I am still learning many things, and sometimes overconfident and underconfident at times, the world never fails to surprise you nor the people. I wish I had more time, but whatever I would still waste them in either overthinking or making scenarios in my head. I always think I was a different person back then, but the person now is the real me, if he is the real me, it's terrible.	Emotional dysregulation	Ambiguity and stress
Stressful yet liberating	Exhausting but liberating	Ambiguity and Stress
Cool but it's hard same time	Exhausting but liberating	Ambiguity and Stress
Adulting is a fork, and I am a spoon. In quite literal ways, some days it's exciting and nothing feels better like example being able to earn enough to pamper your loved ones, some days it just feels too difficult to even get out of bed and there's mental exhaustion as well.	Exhausting but liberation	Ambiguity and stress
Adulting to me brings lots of confusion, anxiety and stress. Especially in college life we have a pressure constantly to perform best in academics and co-curricular activities too. we search for internships, get rejected, hustle and always think to place ourselves on the best position. we rent a flat, do chores, wash our clothes, cook and in between we roam in campus, post on social media then suddenly one day we regret of wasting our time. we study to pass our college exams and if we score passing marks, we regret again. we join coaching, travel for an hour, study there then an assignment/exam comes up and we miss our coaching classes and regret. i love to do music but I	Hustle	Ambiguity and Stress

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cannot find a proper time slot in my schedule to practice it and then also i regret. we make relationships quickly, do hookups and all but after it also we regret only because everything kills time.		
It's been a rollercoaster honestly. I keep thinking everyday why I'm a part of insane routine and toxicity	Hustle	Ambiguity and Stress
Adulthood feels like a pressure decisions are getting tougher expectations are getting bigger people are getting distant there is just a lot changing and often extremely overwhelming	Loneliness	Ambiguity and Stress
Clueless, no one taught us before how to deal with it.	Loneliness	Ambiguity and Stress
I feel adulthood for me would be being able to gracefully let go of things from the past that are not adding anything to my life. I feel as I am growing I am coming in contact with many new people, places and life situations, adulthood for me would be to keep changing with life without sticking to my past or having feelings because people from all the people from my past, be it the happy/funny friends I made in school, all of them they cannot walk with me hand in hand throughout my life, I will have to leave them behind with the memories in my heart and the understanding that time that is gone can never return. Be it, my siblings or my parents, nobody is with us throughout this journey of our lives, we lose people as we go, I think for me adulthood is being okay with losing people.	Loneliness	Ambiguity and Stress
Full of responsibility Workload Not able to share feelings That certain point people getting bored	Loneliness	Ambiguity and Stress
It sucks , it feels everyone is wearing masks ,nobody is real , they're all trying to impress each other or hurt each other and it's so much more complex than when you're a kid and you show what you are transparently , I still am transparent , and show what I am truly , which does make people find me weird but I honestly am over it , if I have to choose between being honest and myself and being hated or being someone I'm not just to fit into society , I'd choose the former without a doubt . Also so many people just start destroying their bodies saying oh I'm an adult , I drink I smoke I vape and I hookup a lot and what not and I just feel it's so stupid to be working against your body when you're supposed to be working on it . It is a machine , a resource , something that will be with you for eternity and seeing adults just ruin it is so sad Also groups and societies feel so stupid , they're just a bunch of idiots doing make believe , I see people in corporate meetings speak in English they don't understand themselves and staying behind in meetings after the client has left to ask what was talked about because they don't understand English , they just	Loneliness	Ambiguity and stress

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sat there being superficial .and nodding . So Many layers of dishonesty to oneself and to others , is painful . I don't like being an adult		
On most days, it's tough. It's challenging, overwhelming and really difficult. Adulthood makes it difficult to stay optimistic or to not lose hope. But there are (a few) days when it's freeing and fun. The days when I actually enjoy and look forward to the exhausting daily metro rides for some reason. The days when everything goes well in college. The days when I come back home and my mother is not tired or sick but in a good mood...	Seeking balance	Ambiguity and stress
Adulthood can feel like a mix of excitement, responsibility, and sometimes overwhelm. It involves making decisions, taking care of yourself, managing finances, and navigating relationships—all while trying to find balance and fulfillment in life. It's a journey of growth and learning, with its ups and downs.	Seeking balance	Ambiguity and stress
Adulthood feels like witnessing your parents age and wanting to support them. It's about having the freedom we craved as children, yet finding ourselves doing the things we were once forced to do, like sleeping early and waking up on time. It's an uncertain journey where hard work seems to be the only solution. Amidst the hustle, there's little time for friends or relationships, and the pressure to make something of ourselves looms large, as if this is our only shot at reaching somewhere meaningful.	Seeking balance	Ambiguity and stress
Sometimes good, sometimes unnecessary	Seeking balance	Ambiguity and stress
Little stressed but fun	Seeking balance	Ambiguity and stress
Being able to cope up with my problems, insecurities myself is adulthood to me because this is the characteristic I feel, an adult should have. Definitely, there are times when you seek help, but on a general level depending upon someone too much is wrong. Adulthood to me is being able to have a stable emotional health. Also, knowing what is actually right (act or anything you come across daily) and if I tend to lack somewhere then I should be constantly working upon improving it instead of ignoring it. Adulthood to me is to find out possible solutions to existing problems instead of just ignoring it which a large population tends to do when it comes to health, investments in maybe gaining knowledge or a better quality of life.	Seeking balance	Ambiguity and stress
Pta nhi (I don't know). Please don't make me think hard	Denial	Exploration amidst uncertainty
I haven't really thought about it much.	Denial	Exploration amidst uncertainty

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full of confusion being right or wrong, being judged by every small bit of action, full of optimism but sometimes feel pressured.	Fear of failure	Exploration amidst uncertainty
Adulting for me was like a puzzle. I honestly feel a lot dependent on my parents, still in a protective bubble created by them, I don't feel like fully exploring my capabilities and interests to the fullest. Due to this dependency I feel the need to reciprocate the same for them pursuing career interests according to their needs. I want to provide a secure future for myself but only for them. It's a tussle between personal interests and responsibilities towards parents. I want to become financial support to them rather than a dependent. Moreover I feel disinterested in my peers, lacking emotional support and yet trying best not to upset others. This fear of judgement of others, rejection bothers a lot when I think of following my decisions.	Fear of failure	Exploration amidst uncertainty
It is confusing most of the times, leaving my beliefs and conditioning seems very hard. Discovering myself, who I am and what I am seems like a never-ending quest. The fear of failure, guilt of not doing enough. And the constant pressure to become something in life.	Fear of failure	Exploration amidst uncertainty
The need to get out of the house and not live on my parents' money anymore and to be self-sufficient and independent with no one to answer to but myself and my partner.	Financial freedom	Exploration amidst uncertainty
Adulting, for me, is being financially independent and fulfilling the responsibilities you have for the people you exchange love and care with. Along with that, feeling satisfied, happy and matured, while being proud of your life and experience you gain.	Financial freedom	Exploration amidst uncertainty
Being independent. Being free. Feeling responsible. Feeling the need to explore and just building a life that YOU have built from scratch.	Future planning	Exploration amidst uncertainty
Adulting to me is about making smart choices for my future, being independent and self-sufficient, and being able to handle whatever life throws at me with grace and resilience.	Future planning	Exploration amidst uncertainty
As I am still financially dependent on my family, I don't really feel totally like an adult. Like I am hanging in between and the only way to break free is to become independent, especially financially. Adulting for me feels like taking responsibility and going after my goals in life, and I see innate positivity in that.	Future planning	Exploration amidst uncertainty
The moment we feel like we are adulting is different for everyone. Some people start feeling like adults when they have to buy their own clothes, take care of themselves or make decisions themselves. Others feel it when they go to university and have more freedom, like not needing to ask for permission to go out.	Independence	Exploration amidst uncertainty
Freedom	Independence	Exploration amidst

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		uncertainty
To me, adulting feels like exploring the life but with many problems like stress, anxiety attacks, medical emergencies, etc. But i came out more stronger in every situation and i learned what i actually want in life be it in love, career and other things. There's a sense of independence that comes with adulting, but also a realization that you're now accountable for your actions and decisions. Your actions and decision will directly or indirectly effect your life in the future. I also learn how to be optimistic and embrace the journey, with all its ups and downs because there is no destination the journey is the destination :)	Independence	Exploration amidst uncertainty
After coming to college, i have started liking adulting because i have freedom. I don't miss my parents and i like to do whatever i want. I do have limits of my own but i don't like to live with restrictions.	Independence	Exploration amidst uncertainty
According to the norms set by society with which I agree adulting feels like being responsible, exploring taking risk and financial independence. But still not following same rules like settling down, stability and enjoying life. It's more of like finding your purpose, doing something that helps you achieve your personal goals as well as helps the society. And defining your own personal goals not that are already set by the world.	Independence	Exploration amidst uncertainty
According to me it can be taking care of themselves, when they have to buy their own clothes, it can be when person feel independent and don't ask any permission to go out,	Independence	Exploration amidst uncertainty
It's feeling like a lot of burden over my shoulder, fear of losing love once, lost my smile and freeness	Loss	Exploration amidst uncertainty
When you know the meaning of loosing things and you find what you kept for your future, is really something that u should've done before. Its just maturity for me	Loss	Exploration amidst uncertainty
Adulting feels like a space filled with significant realisations, taking on responsibilities and concluding that it's not easy. It's a space where I've learnt to fall in love with the mundane tasks of life and appreciating slow days. It's about learning my responses and being tuned to my emotions.	Transition	Exploration amidst uncertainty
Adulting to me is 1. Confusions about life, future, education. 2. over thinking 3. Need to get loved, get cared, to get heard, to get touched, etc 3. peer pressure to get a partner or to get into physical terms. 4. No clarity in the life . 5. Clubbing, Alcohol etc. 6. Just to disappear from daily routine . 7. Jus want to explore new places. 8. Doesn't want to study anything and sit freely. The list goes on...	Transition	Exploration amidst uncertainty

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The transition phase of life to come out from your comfort zones and achieve more.	Transition	Exploration amidst uncertainty
Lying in the bed you made, and not having the option to play with others	Caregiving	Responsibilities
More responsibilities and duties as a daughter towards your family always sacrificing own selves needs to make your family and friends satisfied.	Caregiving	Responsibility
Acc to me adulting means to be responsible for each and everything that happens because you are responsible for your stability be it emotional and financial and when you realise that you should be self-sufficient and now you don't have to depend on someone for your needs but we ourselves have to be strong enough to fulfill our needs and also for your loved ones...as now you've to take care of your parents also. So adulting is self-realisation of being self-sufficient.	Caregiving	Responsibility
Adulting is responsibility for me. We have to take care of yourself as well as your family. It's our responsibility to provide a better life for them. Adulting is the period for improving and showcasing our qualities, we have to consistently work on it to become a better person.	Caregiving	Responsibility
It's taking care of the responsibilities but keeping that inner child	Caregiving	Responsibility
For me, Adulting feels like or means taking responsibility of several things like career, parents, planning for future, etc. Should be capable enough of making life decisions with every aspect in mind keeping all the good and bad in mind. Having a clear vision of life and career, so that if someone younger than you needs guidance or knowledge regarding anything I should be able to provide in best possible way so that he/she can make decisions freely, not get confused.	Decision-making	Responsibility
take correct decision, responsibility, controlling emotions	Decision-making	Responsibility
Adulting feels like being more responsible, having a source of income to support myself and taking my own independent decisions. Adulting would be being less of a burden over my family and be capable to take their responsibilities over myself. Being able to take tough decisions and building a life for my own future.	Decision-making	Responsibility
Adulting feels like lot of responsibility for most thing to do something in life is the biggest pressure that u can take stand for ur own life .	Decision-making	Responsibility
Mixed feeling , lot of stress and pressure put on the mind either due to career or in general	Expectations	Responsibility
Its comes with lots of responsibilities and pressures	Expectations	Responsibility

Adulthood feels like a baggage of responsibilities. A responsibility to be fulfilled more for others, not for yourself. More or less a demand with no choice. Constant surveillance is there in the form of people who keep questioning your life decisions and orientations. It also seems like living your best moments at one time and losing yourself in the vastness of the universe at another second. Adulthood also stirs up unacknowledged emotions in you, exposing you to an array of emotions, you've never felt before. Both sides of your existence rebel against each other, seeking validation from external sources, making you feel distant from yourself.	Expectations	Responsibility
Adulthood I feel is an age where you learn many things we start looking at things from different views where you see people struggling for jobs it's like we start taking responsibility of many things we learn to manage things.	Life lessons	Responsibility
Being more responsible and eventually learning the things slowly and reach to the adulthood more maturely.	Life lessons	Responsibility
Adulthood is taking responsibilities, learning how this world works in a more realistic way, being more aware about myself and my surroundings, having career goals, learning skills and traits that will be useful for survival, trying to understand my parents' point of view and differentiating between reality and delusion.	Life lessons	Responsibility
To be more responsible and mature	Maturity	Responsibility
To be mature enough as a single child of your family so that we can take responsibility of our family.	Maturity	Responsibility
Not really adulthood because my family doesn't treat me like one.	Restrictions	Responsibility
At this point in life it feels like just getting the tag of being an adult but not getting the benefit of being an adult as family/people do not really let you decide things for yourself.. it's always we know better situation as they are the real adults . So at this point being an adult is just a tag which along with itself brings to us the load of responsibility but not really any freedom of thought for any smallest of the things	Restrictions	Responsibility

DISCUSSION

The study aimed to analyse the impact of parental attachment style on emerging adulthood among college students aged 18-24 years. The sample size taken for this study was 63 college students using the convenience sampling method. Significant correlations were found between parental attachment styles and various aspects of emerging adulthood.

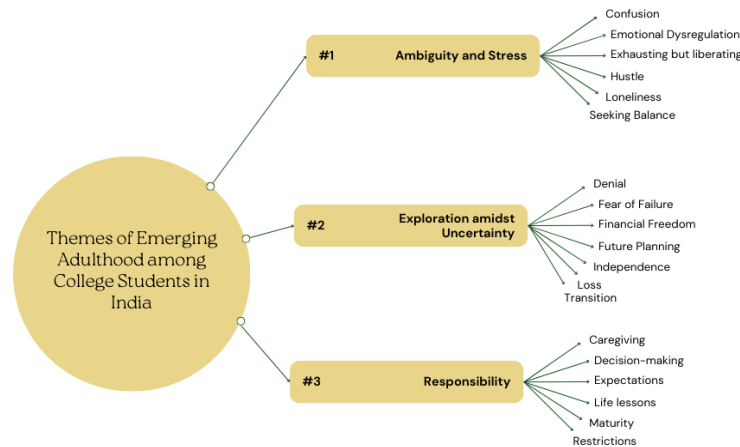


Figure 1. Themes of Emerging Adulthood among college students in India

Theme 1: Ambiguity and Stress

Participants reported feelings of ambiguity and stress and confusion, Emotional Dysregulation, simultaneous feelings of exhaustion and liberation, hustle, loneliness and seeking balance were the subthemes found under this theme.

A participant's need to seek balance during this transitional period is reflected in the following description about how they feel towards adulting.

"Adulthood can feel like a mix of excitement, responsibility, and sometimes overwhelm. It involves making decisions, taking care of yourself, managing finances, and navigating relationships—all while trying to find balance and fulfillment in life. It's a journey of growth and learning, with its ups and downs."

Theme 2: Exploration Amidst Uncertainty

They found this time to be a time of exploration while also dealing with a lot of uncertainty.

This is evident in a participant's thoughts on what they think of this transition.

"Adulthood to me is

1. Confusions about life, future, education.
2. Over thinking
3. Need to get loved, get cared, to get heard, to get touched, etc
4. Peer pressure to get a partner or to get into physical terms.
5. No clarity in the life
6. Clubbing, Alcohol etc.
7. Just to disappear from daily routine.
8. Just want to explore new places.
9. Doesn't want to study anything and sit freely.

The list goes on...

“This theme comprises of denial, fear of failure, financial freedom, future planning, independence, loss and transition as subthemes.

Theme 3: Responsibility

The theme of responsibility was prevalent in most responses from the participants and consisted of caregiving, decision-making, expectations, life lessons, maturity and restrictions. A participant shared about the burden of expectations that he is carrying as an emerging adult.

“Adulting feels like a baggage of responsibilities. A responsibility to be fulfilled more for others, not for yourself. More or less a demand with no choice. Constant surveillance is there in the form of people who keep questioning your life decisions and orientations. It also seems like living your best moments at one time and losing yourself in the vastness of the universe at another second. Adulting also stirs up unacknowledged emotions in you, exposing you to an array of emotions, you've never felt before. Both sides of your existence rebel against each other, seeking validation from external sources, making you feel distant from yourself.”

Results indicated that individuals with dependent attachment styles tended to seek comfort and security from their caregivers, aligning with attachment theory. Conversely, those with distant attachment styles struggled to form close emotional bonds with caregivers, leading to feelings of fearfulness (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987). Additionally, parentified individuals, who took on caregiving roles early in life, exhibited positive correlations with feelings of safety and dependence towards their mothers.

Furthermore, the study revealed intergenerational transmission of attachment patterns within families, with paternal attachment styles positively correlating with maternal attachment styles. Additionally, complex relationships were observed between parental attachment patterns and their implications for familial relationships and individual development (Brenning et al., 2011). The finding suggests that individuals may replicate attachment dynamics experienced with one parent in their relationships with other caregivers (Sroufe et al., 2005).

Attachment styles were found to influence various aspects of emerging adulthood. Being ‘Self focused’ was positively correlated with having a ‘Safe and secure’ relationship with the maternal figure and ‘Other focused’ was positively correlated with attachments that were ‘Safe’ or ‘dependent’ with the maternal figure and ‘parentified’ with the paternal figure. Establishing secure attachment during emerging adulthood is vital as it furnishes individuals with a feeling of safety, which in turn facilitates their freedom to actively participate in the wider world (Schnyders, 2012).

The three themes identified in our analysis reflect the commonalities in the subjective experiences of emerging adulthood among the participants. India is a diverse nation and though there may be differences in their culture and family values, they still share similar views towards this transitional period.

Ambiguity and Stress

With regards to ambiguity and stress, the subthemes include “confusion”, “emotional dysregulation”, “exhausting but liberating”, “hustle”, “loneliness” and “search for balance”. The analysis revealed that most people felt confused but also optimistic about the different milestones in life. They found it challenging to balance their emotions or develop proper coping strategies to deal with familial or societal expectations to fulfil their responsibilities. While trying to keep up with the hustle culture and need for balance, they found themselves lonely and unable to find people who were trustworthy enough. As individuals transition from adolescence to emerging adulthood, they experience a newfound sense of liberation, leading to a reduced reliance on both internal and external sources of

guidance, ultimately culminating in a feeling of being "at home as an adult in the world" (Blaine and Farnsworth, 1991). The process of identity formation in young adults exposes them to vulnerability as they explore their aspirations and experiment with new roles, careers, and relationships. Like any demographic, young adults encounter a spectrum of challenges ranging from mild to severe. Some difficulties arise from temporary situational adjustments influenced by environmental factors, while others stem from developmental hurdles that may initially appear fleeting but could signify deeper underlying conflicts (Escoll, 1987). The transitional phase of young adulthood is fraught with significant stressors, including unresolved adolescent issues, persisting conflicts, or past disharmonies that continue to shape their trajectory. Both internal and external pressures, such as the expectation to excel in education, profession, and relationships, alongside socioeconomic circumstances, contribute to these stresses. Consequently, the developmental journey of young adults is susceptible to derailment through various pathways (Kuwabara et al., 2007).

Exploration amidst Uncertainty

Though leading to a lot of uncertainty, this stage required the people to explore different aspects of life. The subthemes include "denial", "fear of failure", "financial freedom", "independence", "loss" and "transition". Some participants felt like maybe they were not yet ready to accept this stage of life, while there were others who fully accepted it along with its challenges and the fear of not being or doing enough to meet the demands. Though it gave them an opportunity to discover their journey and capabilities, they often found themselves under constant pressure. This stage is marked by new realisations, satisfaction due to financial freedom, thoughts about future and getting out of one's comfort zone. According to psychoanalytic perspectives, the emergence of a more independent self-concept begins during adolescence and becomes more firmly established in young adulthood, marking the development of a "preliminary adult identity" (Hauser and Greene, 1991). This process, often referred to as subjectivation in French discourse (Cahn, 1998), encapsulates the subjective sense of self or identity, allowing young adults to navigate between their internal and external realities (Rose & Bond, 2008).

Responsibilities

A central concern seen in the data involved the participants' sense of responsibilities towards themselves and others. Many focused on self-care while for some it was more about being caregivers of other family members. Many felt that they were expected to live and work for others than for themselves which shows independency and caregiving. This stage brought more agency in terms of decision making but there were some who felt constraints from their homes. Some enjoyed the experiences of learning and unlearning while being understanding towards ideological differences and found themselves moving towards more maturity. Haan (1981) suggests that during this developmental phase, young adults acquire traits conducive to navigating the adult world, such as reliability and consistency, as they assimilate societal values and norms into their lives and careers. This process contrasts with the spontaneity and unpredictability of adolescence. Striking a balance between conformity to community standards and personal values becomes a challenging journey for individuals.

Emerging as an Adult in India

India exhibits a unique blend of individualism and collectivism (Hofstede & Minkov, 2010). While some studies suggest a dualistic nature in Indian cultural beliefs, with elements of both individualism and collectivism, others lean towards a predominantly collectivist perspective (Sinha & Sinha, 2014). This study aims to address this unresolved dualism and its impact on emerging adults' life choices in India. Despite the prevalence of emerging adulthood globally, research on this demographic remains

scant in developing nations like India, where the youth population is burgeoning. Therefore, this study focuses on the educated urban and suburban middle class in India, which represents a significant demographic undergoing pivotal sociocultural changes with implications both locally and globally.

CONCLUSION

This study explores the lived experience of Indian college students during the period of emerging adulthood and the relationship that it has with parental attachment. Based on the findings of the quantitative data, it was found that the parental attachments does have a significant impact on emerging adulthood. Ambiguity and stress, exploration amidst uncertainty and responsibilities are the themes found through the collected qualitative data. The results suggest that more emphasis need to be laid on the resources and emotional and mental health support that is made available to college students, especially those who have not shared a secure relationship with their parents.

It is recommended to help emerging adults make adjustments in their lifestyles that allows them to develop healthier coping strategies to deal with the new challenges and struggles, coming their way. They should be provided with better access to support services and care facilities to navigate this transition in life. India is a diverse land, so it is recommended to conduct more research on people from different socio-economic status, castes, religion, geographical location and gender to understand how these factors would impact the Indian psyche in this transitional stage.

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CYBERBULLYING: URGENT ATTENTION TO THE EVOLVING ISSUE

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ABSTRACT

With the changes in technology and accessibility to various social media platforms, cases of cyberbullying are also rising. There is an urgent need to address this issue and take the necessary steps. In this chapter, the author has first tried to drive attention toward the definition of cyberbullying and the criticism around that. There is evidence that mentions that evolving media and technology act as new channels for cyberbullying to take place in ways not witnessed before, thus a dire need to come to a globally accepted definition of cyberbullying. It then highlights the prevalence of cyberbullying and the methodologies used to research the prevalence rates. It further highlights the limitations and drawbacks of the methodologies used in those studies. The chapter also focuses on the consequences of cyberbullying like psychosocial adjustment, general adjustment issues, social issues, and academic downfall in a student's life. The author has then utilized a case study approach to describe the extreme consequence of cyberbullying, *Suicide*. Lastly, the chapter argues that not one legal body is responsible for tackling cyberbullying, rather schools, parents, police and many more stakeholders need to come together to design intervention techniques. These interventions once in place, then need to be checked with further follow-ups.

Keywords: Cyberbullying, Bullying, Victim, Perpetrator, Consequences, Interventions

INTRODUCTION

‘Cyberbullying’ started appearing in the academic community in 2003 followed by the launch of a website that addressed cyberbullying in Canada (<https://www.cyberbullying.ca/>) (Bauman & Bellmore, 2015). Since then, the research about ‘Cyberbullying’ on Google Scholar has grown from 16,100 hits for a limited range of 2003-2014 to more than 87,000 results by 2024. The growing number of studies highlights not only the interest of academicians and researchers but also the surfacing concern of educational practitioners and parents due to the many consequences related to the matter (Moreno, 2011). “Cyber bullycide”, committing suicide due to cyberbullying, and negative experiences in the digital world, is a catalyst in drawing attention towards this issue (Betts, 2016). However, the important question is, how does one define cyberbullying especially because it is related to the digital world? A world that keeps evolving with advancements in new media technologies and enabling a range of behaviors.

CYBERBULLYING IN AN EVOLVING DIGITAL WORLD

Scholars have not been very successful in agreeing upon a single, globally accepted definition of Cyberbullying (Law et al., 2012). Some researchers believe it to be an extension of traditional bullying and draw parallels with it in terms of intent, power imbalance, and repetition. It is an extension of traditional bullying using digital technology as a channel (Olweus, 2013).

Other researchers argue that many features of offline bullying are irrelevant to cyberbullying hence making it a distinct phenomenon altogether. Firstly, ‘repetition’ in the cyber world is operationalized differently. Secondly, cyberbullying can break the barriers of geography and be more public. Together these factors are important facets as the act or content of cyberbullying is present to an unlimited

audience who are anonymous and not limited by time and location. It is possible to view cyberbullying after the initial occurrence of the event, days after it initially took place. Additionally, the power imbalance in terms of cyberbullying can be indirectly associated with the number of audiences who have witnessed the one-off act of online bullying. This again is different from the physical power imbalance seen in bullying (Thomas, Connor & Scott, 2015). Thus, leaving a vague understanding of 'repetition' and 'power imbalance' in the context of the online world.

Providing a single definition has also been a challenge because of the way the media has advanced over the past decades. The youth follow a pattern of using the trending media as the mode of spreading information, thus opening new channels for cyberbullying. This presents another challenge as the media in fashion keeps updating and investigating cyberbullying in an ever-changing technological era will provide no consistency. Few researchers argue to analyze behaviors and personal experiences to develop an understanding of what can be classified as an act of cyberbullying.

Thus, Chisholm (2014) proposed 11 online behaviors that can be categorized as cyberbullying — a) Catfishing; b) Cheating, forming groups and social exclusion; c) Insulting, humiliating, and threatening online; d) Flaming; e) Slamming; f) Impersonating/Pretending to be someone else; g) Rattling; h) Relational aggression; i) Sexting; j) Shock trolling; k) Stalking. Few of these behaviors have proven to be life-threatening, and readers can refer to the case of Jesse Logan on the internet to comprehend more about online behaviors considered as online bullying.

Despite numerous studies conducted around this area, the literature has little consensus leaving room for debate around a common definition. However, a simple definition can be drawn from the research by Nazir and Thabassum (2021) which states that cyberbullying is a "willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cellphones, and other electronic devices." Moreover, the one thing that remains common over the years is the detrimental effects of cyberbullying on the overall well-being of the associated individuals. It is thus important to understand the occurrence of the issue.

EXAMINING PREVALENCE RATE AND IDENTIFYING LIMITATIONS IN THE METHODOLOGY USED

A wide variety of studies have taken place to examine the global presence of cyberbullying. It is important to study the prevalence to a) raise awareness among the associated stakeholders; b) draw comparisons between different populations and samples; and c) Effectively establish anti-cyberbullying interventions (Betts, 2016). Studies conducted in cyberbullying contain variables, gender, educational qualification, country, sample size, and age together with other variables that predict involvement in these behaviors.

Researchers have used different methodologies to measure the prevalence rate of cyberbullying in *targets*. Few studies have used loneliness, low self-esteem, enhanced depressive symptoms, and problem behaviors as predictors of being the target of cyberbullying. Some academic work has also noted that students exhibiting anxious personality traits are more vulnerable to becoming targets as they worry about their image in other's minds. A range of literature also observed the factors that predict involvement as a *perpetrator*. For instance, young people with frequent substance use, poor relationships at home, high levels of aggression, low academic performance, low levels of agreeableness, and moral disengagement combined with frequent internet usage are at higher risk of becoming perpetrators (Kowalski et al., 2014).

Methodologically, scholars have also tried to measure cyberbullying using single or multiple items. Single-item measures operate globally asking people whether they have experienced cyberbullying, delivering a more general output. Whereas multiple item methodology examines the range of behaviors that are the attributes of cyberbullying (Dehue, 2013). Another method used to study the

prevalence rate includes self-reports using self-selected samples (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008). However, it was observed that young people generally underreported their encounters with cyberbullying as they were concerned that their access to technology might be cut back. This under-reporting acts as a limitation in studying the impact of the prevalence rate.

Researchers have also conducted studies that focus on the time frame to study this phenomenon. For instance, few studies asked participants to report cyberbullying over the time frame of 2 months while other studies asked participants to report any encounter with cyberbullying over a greater window. However, there is a methodological drawback to having an unspecified time frame to measure the presence of cyberbullying. For instance, in studies with no or unlimited time frame participants have the liberty to look at a longer duration generating a higher percentage of prevalence rates as compared to the studies that limit the time frame. The table below mentions the comparison between 2 studies.

Table 1: Comparison between studies with specified and unspecified time frames to examine the prevalence of cyberbullying.

	Gomez-Garbiello et al. (2012)	Lam, Cheng & Liu (2013)
Duration	Unspecified	65%
Prevalence rate	Last 7 days	25.7%

Another factor that poses a limitation in studying the general occurrence of cyberbullying is the variation and lack of consensus in the definition of cyberbullying (Berne et al., 2013). A disparity in what constitutes cyberbullying and what does not result in inconsistent output in all the studies, thus hampering the prevalence rate. It is also seen that the prevalence of cyberbullying differs amongst countries thus reflecting a cross-cultural variation. In simple words, many authors identified a mismatch in the conceptualization of cyberbullying between the participants recruited from different countries. This proposition is also supported by a study mentioned by Betts (2016) in which young respondents from the UK could differentiate between ‘banter’ and ‘cyberbullying’. The result of the studies draws attention to another important factor, ie. the intensity with which the young people involved in cyberbullying get affected.

CONSEQUENCES OF CYBERBULLYING

Children become victims of the dark reality of technology, a skill they are competent in but not wise enough to understand the consequences it brings along. A study conducted over 5 years in India by Intel security teens, tweens, and technology study reported in 2015 that 81% of children between the ages of 8-16 are active internet users. One anonymous click in one part of the world can leave a scar on someone’s life sitting in another corner of the world (Rao, Bansal & Chandran, 2018). This scar can traumatize a person and impair their ability to function well.

A FEW CONSEQUENCES MENTIONED BY BETTS (2016) ARE DETAILED BELOW;

Psychosocial adjustment: is the ability of a person to adapt well to the surroundings. This includes factors like mental well-being and social relationships. It is observed that people who experience cyberbullying report poorer mental health and higher psychological distress. These individuals also depict increased levels of depressive symptoms as compared to their peers. Social relationship formation and maintenance become a challenge for people associated with bullying. They may seek withdrawal or avoid any social interaction as they foster a sense of mistrust in others. Additionally, few victims are seen to exhibit higher levels of anxiety in social settings.

General adjustment issues: The consequence of cyberbullying expands into the life of an individual in many more ways. One such impact is the ‘digital footprints’ of an online user. With technological advancements, it has become easy to access information about anyone. Thus, employers today can

view candidates' social media contacts and activities. These checks carried out by recruiters can question the reputation of an individual involved in cyberbullying. Another impact on reputation can be seen in educational settings where a child experiencing cyberbullying might want to avoid encountering the bully and is not willing to attend school.

Academic downfall: Kids fear the situation and feel negative about attending school. Many correlational studies reported a downfall in the academic performance of the student. These students also reported disruption in their daily routine, impacts on overall health, and development of somatic symptoms.

Suicide: Being a victim of cyberbullying increases the chances of self-harm and suicidal ideation and attempt. The associated individuals are also seen to have depressive symptoms, substance use, and violent behaviors. These factors act as mediating factors between experiencing cyberbullying and suicidal behavior. Bullycide, committing suicide following the experiences of bullying is a term used since early 2000 and is now relevant in cyberspace. Next is a case study to examine the dire consequence of cyberbullying, cyber bullycide.

CASE STUDY (SUICIDE)

A 15-year-old girl named Amanda Todd from British Columbia, Canada was found hanging in her room on Friday the 10th October 2012. The adolescent was a victim of cyberbullying and decided to end her life after failing to escape the harassment. Amanda, like every other teenager, used to spend her free time on the internet engaging in social interactions around singing. Her father gave her a webcam as a tool to record her music videos and upload them on the internet. One day she met a person online who claimed to be her fan. Eventually, he lured her and took advantage by requesting her to flash online for him, of which he took a picture. Little did she know that this little mistake made online could be the reason for her taking her own life.

One year later Amanda received a friend request online from the same person. He had a topless picture of her and threatened to share it with her contacts and network if she denied performing for him online once again. The stranger had been following her around for a year. On refusing his request he carried out the threat and shared her picture with her acquaintances and on a pornographic website. The perpetrator continued harassing her and asked for her obscene images and videos. On refusal, he shared her picture with her peers and family members. She changed schools after this episode which was then followed by continuous bullying from her peers.

Amanda was a victim of behaviors that can be classified as cyberbullying — impersonation, sexting, cheating, humiliation, and threatening and stalking. She was sexually, mentally, and emotionally abused with one click on the internet by a stranger. This led to her developing anxiety and depression. She started using substances and took pills to cope with her emotions. She started cutting herself and attempted suicide multiple times before finally succeeding on Friday. She also tried to tell her story through a YouTube video which she uploaded a few days before committing suicide (My story: struggling, bullying, suicide, self-harm).

The case of Amanda Todd drives attention to the dark side of the internet. It teaches the world to stay cautious of strange connections on social media and be aware of actions on the internet as everything is present online for a long time. The bully was later convicted of online bullying, stalking, and harassing, and was sentenced to 13 years in prison.

Associated Stakeholders

When talking about cyberbullying one question raised is whose responsibility is it to combat this issue and the answer is 'everyone' as a combined responsible society. The researchers can draw upon their

research and propose frameworks to alert the other stakeholders. They can propose specific guidelines to mental health workers which can be used to develop therapies and design intervention techniques. With the help of educational practitioners, efficient training can be designed to educate about cyberbullying. This can equip parents and teachers to notice behavioral changes, if any, in the kid. These trainings can also be used to educate the other members of the society. Digital literacy programs can be set in place to teach users to stay safe in the digital world. Help states to create law and order around cyberbullying to provide safety and justice for the citizens (Betts, 2016).

CONCLUSION

To summarize, technology comes with its benefits and certain dark truths. One of those truths is cyberbullying its prevalence, and the intense consequences that come with it. These instances leave a person with some adverse, unforgettable experiences that impact the overall well-being of a person. The scar is so deep that it sometimes results in loss of life. However, if all the stakeholders work collaboratively to achieve the goal of fighting cyberbullying, its impact can be drastically reduced, and positive results will be visible.

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VIEWS OF COLLEGE STUDENTS ON NON-BINARY IDENTITIES AND NEO PRONOUNS

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ABSTRACT

This research study explores the attitudes and perspectives of college students regarding non-binary identities and the use of neo-pronouns. Through qualitative analysis of semi-structured interviews with eight diverse postgraduate college students selected through purposive sampling, the study aims to uncover the nuanced ways in which individuals perceive and understand gender diversity in contemporary society. Data was collected through offline and telephonic interviews. Thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's model was used to extract the themes and sub themes. Key themes identified in the study include skepticism and disbelief towards non-binary identities, resistance and rejection of societal acceptance, and the influence of media and pop culture on perceptions of gender diversity. Additionally, the study delves into the role of education in shaping attitudes towards non-binary individuals, as well as personal experiences and interactions that influence individual perspectives. The findings suggest that while some college students demonstrate openness and acceptance towards non-binary identities, others exhibit skepticism or resistance rooted in traditional binary conceptions of gender. Moreover, the study highlights the impact of social media, educational institutions, and personal experiences in shaping attitudes towards gender diversity.

Keywords: Non-Binary Identities, Neo Pronoun

INTRODUCTION

Overview

One of the earliest learnt conceptions is gender/sex, according to Egan and Perry (2001). Assuming that everyone is cisgender (Ansara & Hegarty, 2012), gender is typically characterized in terms of binary dichotomies (e.g., male/female, man/woman, boy/girl; Richards & Barker, 2013). Individuals who identify as a gender other than the one given to them at birth (transgender people) are particularly impacted by this presumption (McFarland, Wilson, & Raymond, 2017). The ideas of gender and sex are difficult for transgender, gender nonconforming, and agender people to understand since historically, they have not allowed much opportunity for fluidity or flexibility (Galupo, Pulice-Farrow, & Ramirez, 2017; Schudson, Dibble, & van Anders, 2017).

Transgender identity experiences commonly understood in reference to three major aspects of Gender: Gender Identity, Gender Transitions, and Birth Sex (Levitt & 2014 Ippolito).

Non-binary identities

The phrase "non-binary" conveys a wider range of ideas. One who does not fit into the stereotypical male-female gender roles can call themselves "non-binary." People who identify as transgender, intersex, agender, gender-fluid, demigender, multigender, and other non-conventional gender identities are included in this category (Dutta et al., 2023).

It is still unknown how those who identify as non-binary genders differ from others despite this trend and the growing visibility of non-binary people in society.

Theoretical Framework

According to the minority stress paradigm, sexual minorities experience particular, hostile stressors associated with their identification as a sexual minority, such as homophobic victimization, and as a result, these stressors have a detrimental impact on their health (Meyer, 2003).

Attitudes regarding gender diversity in contemporary India are still shaped by the colonial legacy of moral policing and the imposition of Victorian-era gender norms. The lives and rights of non-binary people are impacted by discrimination, social stigma, and legal obstacles that continue to exist. These obstacles include healthcare, education, employment, housing, and social security (Bhattacharya et al., 2022). Additionally, for a long time, gender non-conforming identities have been incorrectly classified as disorders by psychiatric health diagnoses, which has resulted in stigma and prejudice. This pathologization has extensively permeated society as a whole, having an impact on jurisprudence, legislation, and public policy.

With the introduction of the option for people to identify as "others" in the gender category, the 2011 Census was the first national survey in India to acknowledge the country's gender-nonconforming population. This gave those who don't identify exclusively as male or female another way to indicate their gender (Mandal & Debnath, 2020).

Significance of language

Vygotsky's (1986) general approach to development, which stressed the significance of language as a symbolic cultural tool and highlights the fundamental role of language in developing their identities and interactions with others. Thus, discourses can be seen as pre-existing social forms of communication that are shaped by available master narratives and give people a way to interact with those narratives. As a result, language and master narratives can be understood as mutually reinforcing forces (Bamberg, 2004). Participants gave the example of frequently finding it difficult to interact with others due to the lack of terms that accurately capture their experience of being gender queer.

NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

It has been previously stated that scientific curricula do not go beyond stigmatized definitions of non-normative genders and sexualities when it comes to gender and sexuality notions (Datta, 2021). For instance, portrayals of non-normative genders and sexualities are frequently restricted to biology and medical textbooks and curricula, and even then, they are frequently used in the context of diseases and disorders, pathologizing queer and trans people.

People who are oppressed frequently hear messages from society that reduce, devalue, or disparage who they are (Harper, 2007; Ward, 2005, for examples). Common messages may include generalizations or stereotypes about certain characteristics of group identity or behavior (e.g., Hilton & Von Hippel, 1996), insulting names or terms (e.g., Carnaghi & Maass, 2007), and false beliefs or unfounded claims about social standing (e.g., Yee, 1992). Family, work environments, the media, and government or policy are just a few of the places where these harmful social signals can be found (e.g., Henkel, Dovidio, & Gaertner, 2006; Mastro, 2003). Individuals may learn to internalize these damaging messages over time, which can result in self-loathing, hatred of oneself, and the conviction that the messages are accurate (e.g., Bessenoff & Snow, 2006; Pyke & Dang, 2003).

METHODOLOGY

The research employed a qualitative design, utilizing thematic analysis to explore college students' perspectives on non-binary identities and neo pronouns. Purposive sampling was used to select eight participants aged 20-25, with interviews conducted either face-to-face or telephonically. Ethical considerations were ensured through informed consent and clarification of study objectives. Participants were categorized based on their attitudes towards non-binary identities and neo pronouns (either for or against), with interview questions aimed at eliciting insights into their understanding and interactions with these concepts.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The current study employs a Qualitative Research design incorporating thematic analysis.

Sample Distribution

Inclusion Criteria

1. The participants must be current postgraduate students.
2. The participants must have an understanding of the terms nonbinary and neo pronouns
3. The participants must reside in India and be of Indian origin.

Sampling Techniques

Eight participants were selected through purposive sampling based on their views toward non binary identities and neo pronouns.

TOOLS FOR THE STUDY

The data was collected through face-to-face or telephonic interviews based on the convenience of the participant. The participants were asked semi structured questions and probed based on their answers. The interviews lasted from 20 minutes to 1 hour. The time and setting were chosen according to the convenience of the researcher and the participants. The interview questions were framed to facilitate the research and were related to the objective of the study. The consent form was circulated to each participant and any questions were clarified. Verbal consent was also taken before recording the interviews and the participants were explained about the concept being studied and the potential triggers that may emerge from the questions. Hence ethical considerations were followed.

The participants were selected and divided based on positive views toward non binary individuals and neo pronouns and negative views toward non binary identities and neo pronouns. The questions were framed in simple terms to understand the views the youth have toward nonbinary identities and neo pronouns based on their understanding and interactions with them and the medium through which they came across these terms.

The questions were open-ended in nature and simple to go in depth and gain an understanding of people's subjective understanding of the NB identities and neo pronouns. This allows the researcher to get nuanced perspectives and gain deeper insight by not placing rigid restrictions.

DATA ANALYSIS

The data was collected and recorded and transcribed verbatim. The analysis was carried out through thematic analysis by Emilia Clarke and Victoria Braun. Later data analysis is done by following Braun and Clarke's six step process which includes Familiarization, Coding, generating themes, Reviewing themes, Defining themes, and Summarization.

Discussion (participants in favour of the argument)

Data analysis revealed that there are 6 main themes:

The first theme is **Understanding and Awareness**; the 3 sub themes under this overarching theme is Personal interest, different media and learning from experience.

The participants showed a wide variety of knowledge and awareness about neo pronouns and NB identities. While some relied on social media sites like YouTube and Instagram for instructional content, others had a personal connection to NB identities from their own experiences. This emphasizes how important easily accessible and educational materials are to promoting inclusivity and encouraging understanding.

p(3): *“So maybe through social media, through news. Okay .Friends and, you know, people who identify themselves with genders other than the traditionally established ones. And again, coming to social media, it could be like, you know, through people's posts, people coming out with awareness. Or even like, you know, gatherings or communities opened up for people who would be uncomfortable with identifying themselves with either of the male or female genders.”*

The second overarching theme is **social challenges**; the 3 sub themes identified are ignorance, lack of inclusivity and invalidating experiences. Participants emphasized the societal obstacles that NB individuals encounter, including a lack of respect and recognition. The participants voiced worries about how cultural norms, such as gender dysphoria and social marginalization, affect the wellbeing of NB people.

p(1): *“I don't know. I think I don't see a lot of NB representation in the media So I think it is kind of nonexistent. I mean there are some shows like “One day at a time” and mostly it is just the lack of it. I don't think it is acknowledged as much yet. And umm pop culture. I mean I might be very biased when it comes to it, like you know as you are exposed to a lot of things and I would have wanted to seek for it myself and discover more NB artists and NB culture and that was when I was figuring my own identity out.”*

The third overarching theme is **Conversations with social groups**; the sub themes under that is Safe Space and Open discussions. The participants' viewpoints were significantly shaped by their personal contact with NB people. While some had firsthand contacts with NB friends, others said they were receptive to understanding and learning even in the absence of such experiences. These exchanges highlight how crucial interpersonal communication is for clearing myths and promoting acceptance.

p(2): *“When it comes to social circles I think the friends are very accepting because I think I've just chosen friends like that so they are very pro pronouns and gender diversity and among friend circles around college and stuff it is definitely very positive .”*

The fourth overarching theme is **Lack of Openness**; the subthemes are gender dysphoria, dismissing identities, stereotyping. The participants stated that a lot of people within the NB community face gender dysphoria and are expected to meet certain societal expectations and norms. The perceptions of NB individuals within the LGBTQ+ community revealed nuanced dynamics of acceptance and rejection. While participants noted overall acceptance, they also acknowledged instances of bias and judgment within the community itself. These findings emphasize the importance of fostering intersectional solidarity and addressing internalized prejudices.

p(1): *“Their existence is not even acknowledged. At Least in the Indian context, I feel like they are not very open to learning about it....So since people are not open you do need to kind of hide your identity and you may not be referred to by the pronouns you go by and it may give you gender dysphoria to*

take options that do not include you cause there will be like gender and options like male and female and I mean those are not even the genders, those are the sexes so in conversations you cannot bring it up or go by the name you prefer to go by."

The fifth overarching theme is **Role of educational institutions**; the sub themes identified are lack of inclusive education and unacknowledgement. Participants felt that educational institutions could do more to address NB identities and pronoun usage. A systemic failure to recognize and accommodate a range of gender identities is reflected in the lack of inclusive curricula and discourse in educational settings.

p(4): "It is even sad when there are people out there in the community and professors go like "no it is only a myth, are you joking?, like there are no people like that."

The sixth overarching theme is **Pronoun usage and Importance**; the sub themes are learning and adapting to pronoun usage, importance of pronouns in identity expressions. The importance of honoring people's preferred pronouns and the negative effects of misgendering on the wellbeing of NB individuals were stressed by the participants. These results highlight the necessity of extensive pronoun education and awareness initiatives.

p(1): "Because I know it can be very hurtful if you know...I know it can make the difference between them feeling or not feeling comfortable in their identity. So to prevent them from feeling some sort of rejection, I try not doing that even if it means using their name more often. Pronouns are more than just being indicative of gender identity, it is something an individual picks out for some reason."

DISCUSSION (PARTICIPANTS AGAINST OF THE ARGUMENT)

The overarching first theme is **Attitude toward Non binary identities and neo pronouns**; the sub themes are Skepticism and Resistance and Rejection. The participants' doubts about non-binary identities are indicative of a larger cultural perspective that questions the validity of gender identities that do not fit neatly into a binary. The resistance to accepting non-binary individuals and neo-pronouns underscores the barriers that exist within society. This resistance is rooted in a lack of understanding and empathy, highlighting the importance of promoting inclusivity and diversity in all aspects of life.

p(5): I feel those non-binary identities are useless. Okay. Because of my personal belief, I do support the people from the community, but technically they kind of messed up the whole purpose of the community.

The second overarching theme is **Influence of media and pop culture**; the sub themes are Queerbaiting, Influence of influencers and Toxic positivity. The criticism of media figures and social media influencers illustrates the complexities of representation and advocacy within popular culture. The phenomenon of queerbaiting and performative activism raises questions about authenticity and genuine support for marginalized communities. The notion of "propaganda" suggests a perceived agenda behind the portrayal of gender diversity in mainstream media.

p(7): I think it's all propaganda now. They're doing it because they have an agenda behind it." *p(6): "Because in the world of social media, people believe they can do anything on the internet. And, you know, educate people incorrectly and educate people correctly. And it's like more about the media platforms these days. And as much as I appreciate the media platforms for their knowledge, people take them for their face values is my problem."*

The third overarching theme is **Perception of gender**; the sub themes are Biology versus Psychology and Cultural influence. Differences in cultural perspectives on gender underscore the complexity of

identity construction and the influence of sociocultural factors. Exploring how cultural beliefs and values shape attitudes towards non-binary identities can provide valuable insights into the diverse experiences of individuals worldwide. They express skepticism regarding the concept of gender identity and emphasize biological factors over psychological ones.

p(7): I don't believe in like... I understand that there's male, female, transgender, yeah. But I don't really get the fact that being born in a certain biological... Yeah, having different biology and psychologically identifying something else. Maybe it's just that you have femininity dominant in your personality. Why do you want to say that I identify as a woman?

The fourth overarching theme is **Experiences with pronouns**; the sub themes are personal effort and choice & offense. The respondent acknowledges difficulty in adapting to new pronouns due to ingrained linguistic habits and the difficulty in adapting to new grammar rules and sentence structures. The participants also mentioned how people are easily offended when it comes to the usage of pronouns.

p(6): Because, you know, you have to change your whole way of language and the semantics of language around it. Right? Because, you know, the verbs change, everything changes. And imagine learning of a pronoun that you never even knew existed. And figuring out your own language around that and mind you, people have become grammar Nazis of late, right? People are very much into correcting each other.

The fifth overarching theme is **Future acceptance**; the sub themes are Protests and Bleakness. The respondents criticize privileged individuals' involvement in protests and expresses concerns about safety and misuse of identity labels.

p(5): It's a very long run, very long run i would say 100 years like let's give another 100 years gap because i won't even see in 100 years also i would say more than that because presently as i mentioned it's very all around toxic positivity and toxic acceptance where they are forced to do it."

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The current study was conducted to gain an understanding of how college students view nonbinary identities and neo pronouns. By the study it is evident that there is still a long way to go with awareness and inclusivity regarding this topic. Several key themes have emerged, shedding light on the complexities and challenges surrounding acceptance and understanding in contemporary society. The findings highlight a spectrum of attitudes towards non-binary identities, ranging from skepticism and resistance to acceptance and support. While some participants express skepticism and disbelief, citing concerns about societal norms and the perceived legitimacy of non-binary identities, others demonstrate a more open-minded and inclusive perspective, advocating for empathy and understanding. Moreover, the influence of media and pop culture emerges as a significant factor shaping attitudes towards gender diversity.

The role of education also emerges as a critical factor in shaping attitudes towards non-binary identities. Participants express concerns about the lack of comprehensive education and awareness in educational settings, underscoring the importance of promoting inclusivity and diversity through curriculum development and institutional support.

Looking ahead, the findings suggest the need for continued advocacy and education to promote understanding and inclusivity. Addressing systemic barriers and challenging entrenched attitudes will be essential in fostering genuine acceptance and support for non-binary individuals in college campuses and beyond.

The study may be limited by the composition of the sample, which consists solely of college students. This demographic may not represent the broader population, limiting the generalizability of the findings. Future research can address this issue by representing different age ranges and demographics in their study. Gaining an overall understanding and holistic understanding of different views is crucial in understanding a nuanced topic like this.

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MENTAL HEALTH STIGMA AND HELP SEEKING BEHAVIOUR: A COURSE OF ACTION ON MENTAL HEALTH STIGMA

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ABSTRACT

Mental health is a domain that focuses mainly on emotional, psychological and social wellbeing aspects. According to the American Psychological Association, Stigma is described as “the negative social attitude attached to a characteristic of an individual that may be regarded as a mental, physical, or social deficiency” (2018). In the case of mental health stigmas, these negative attitudes are held about all people who suffer from mental health conditions. There is a sense of “social disapproval” (APA, 2018) that follows mental health stigmas because mental health problems are typically associated with degrading terms such as ‘crazy’, ‘slow’, ‘retarded’ or ‘abnormal’. The second theme explored in this paper is ‘Help Seeking Behaviour’ which is described by the American Psychological Association as “searching for or requesting help from others via formal or informal mechanisms, such as through mental health services” (2018). However, help seeking behaviour doesn’t just involve seeking professional help but can also include confiding in a friend or family member about mental challenges that are being faced. Studies have shown that men often face greater stigma surrounding mental health issues, leading them to be less likely to seek help compared to women. This can be attributed to various factors, including traditional notions of masculinity that discourage vulnerability and emotional expression. Understanding gender differences and the stigma surrounding help-seeking behaviours is crucial in addressing disparities in mental health outcomes and ensuring equitable access to support services.

DIFFERENCES IN GENDER PERCEPTIONS

In the realm of mental health, gender plays a significant role in how individuals perceive and address their emotional well-being. While both men and women experience mental health challenges, societal norms and expectations often influence how they approach seeking help and coping with stigma. Understanding these gender differences is crucial for developing effective strategies to support individuals in managing their mental health.

Social Stigma and Gender Norms

Society often perpetuates different expectations and norms regarding emotional expression for men and women. Men are frequently encouraged to be stoic and strong, which can lead to reluctance in acknowledging and addressing mental health concerns. Conversely, women may face stigma related to being perceived as overly emotional or irrational, potentially leading to different barriers in seeking help. For example, after giving birth and your emotions are overly irrational due to change of hormones and you begin to show symptoms of postpartum depression, but due to some barriers, the

individual is unable to seek help but have to endure it for the sake of not being labelled weak and unable to look after their child.

Help-Seeking Behaviour's

Research suggests that women are more likely to seek professional help for mental health issues compared to men. This could be attributed to various factors, including greater social support networks and more openness to discussing emotions (Vogel et al. 2014). In contrast, men may be more inclined to self-manage their mental health or seek support from informal sources, such as friends or family, due to concerns about appearing vulnerable or weak. Indeed, male friends and family members may be particularly unlikely to refer men to seek mental health services, as it means going against the traditional male gender role proscription of talking to other men about emotional issues. The study is aimed to explore how men and women's experiences of gender role conflict may be associated with an increased endorsement of stigmatization around mental health concerns and, subsequently, a decreased willingness to refer friends and family members experiencing a mental health concern to seek help.

Impact of Stigma

Stigma surrounding mental health can have detrimental effects on both men and women. However, men may be particularly affected by stigma due to societal pressure to conform to traditional masculine ideals. Fear of being judged or ridiculed may prevent men from seeking help until their symptoms become severe, leading to delayed intervention and potentially more severe mental health outcomes. To add on, Men with greater gender role conflict (GRC) tend to exhibit a variety of body image concerns, including a drive for muscularity (DM). In accordance with the theory of planned behaviour (TPB), men with higher levels of GRC also report negative attitudes and a lack of intentions to seek help for problems.

Cultural and Intersectional Considerations

It's essential to recognize that gender norms and attitudes toward mental health vary across cultures and communities. Intersectional factors, such as race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status, can further shape individuals' experiences of stigma and help-seeking behaviours. Culture becomes a barrier mostly for man to seek help as it does not align with their cultural beliefs. For women, it mostly has to be the case of them being emotionally weak which leads them to being depressed and find it quite easy to become vulnerable and communicate with people around them and voice out their concerns. For example, in the African community men who go through mental health problems face discrimination from society and family and are deemed incapable. However, women who go through mental health problems face support and are considered to be strong after overcoming the mental health problem because they are labelled as weak.

In addition, socioeconomic disparities can contribute to perceptions of mental illness as a sign of personal weakness or failure, particularly among men. In some cases, individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds may face greater stigma and discrimination due to negative stereotypes associated with poverty and mental health. Women from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds may experience intersecting forms of stigma related to gender roles, economic status, and mental health. This intersectionality can compound the barriers they face in seeking help and receiving adequate support.

SIMILARITIES IN GENDER

On the other hand, there is extensive research that goes to show that there are gender related differences when it comes to the views people have about mental health and help seeking behaviour, there also exists some similarities.

Perceptions according to Cherry (2023) “are shaped by our prior experiences, our interests, and how carefully we process information. This can cause one person to perceive the exact same person or situation differently than someone else.” This explains why there can exist both similarities and differences when it comes to the views that both genders have when it comes to mental health stigmas and help seeking behaviour. Perceptions are heavily influenced by the environmental contexts that people grow up in such as their cultures, ethnic groups and communities. This point is highlighted in a paper written by Kastanakis and Voyer (2014) in their paper entitled “The effect of culture on perception and cognition” where the researchers concluded that perception and cognition are influenced by culture, which subsequently has significant implications on behaviour and provides a better understanding of cultural variations in behaviour.

The study can therefore infer that people’s perceptions, beliefs and all the stigmas they may have about mental health can influence their willingness to engage in help seeking behaviour.

Socialisation and Mental health

Socialization is “the process by which individuals acquire social skills, beliefs, values, and behaviour’s necessary to function effectively in society or in a particular group.” according to the American Psychological Association (2018). Various cultures have different customs and practices regarding how men and women should express and deal with mental health issues. In a study on ‘Understanding and Addressing Mental Health Stigma across Cultures for Improving Psychiatric Care’ by Ahad et al. (2023), the reviewed research explained that stigma around mental illness can take various forms depending on cultural views, values, and beliefs. This proves that cultural expectations can influence behaviour thus creating similarities in how people handle it. Culture Bound Syndrome is a condition in which there is a “pattern of mental illness” or symptoms which are exclusive to a specific cultural denomination (APA, 2023). These kinds of cultural variations in beliefs and perspectives can lead to certain stereotypes towards mental health that become collective beliefs regardless of gender.

Coping Strategies and Mental Health

When it comes to help seeking behaviour approaches to coping strategies used can be the same. While the exact coping mechanisms may differ from person to person, both men and women may use coping tactics that discourage or delay seeking help. Avoidance, denial, or self-medication with drugs or alcohol, for instance, might ease symptoms temporarily but eventually make mental health problems worse. These coping mechanisms can be used by people of either gender to manage symptoms without seeing a doctor which can unfortunately exacerbate these symptoms in the long run. Research by Kuhlberg et al. (2016) has shown how both sexes may use maladaptive coping mechanisms to avoid or put off getting help. This avoidant behaviour was shown to be frequent among people of both genders and were linked to greater symptom severity and lower chance of seeking professional help. This therefore shows a similarity in the perspectives about help seeking behaviour between men and women

Clement et al. (2015) examined the obstacles that both men and women with common mental health illnesses had when trying to get care. Common concerns regarding the efficiency and availability of mental health services were voiced by both sexes, who highlighted issues including lengthy wait

periods, few available treatment alternatives, and the shame they felt came with seeking professional assistance. This therefore exists as another shared perspective when it comes to help seeking and mental health stigma

COURSE OF ACTION TO ERADICATE MENTAL HEALTH STIGMA

Reducing mental health stigma in gender differences requires multifaceted approaches. Understanding and addressing the unique challenges each gender faces is crucial, and these include:

Gender-Specific Outreach

Tailoring campaigns to address the unique mental health challenges faced by different genders. For example, campaigns might focus on issues like postpartum depression in women or the stigma surrounding help-seeking behaviour's in men

Highlighting Diversity

Showcasing diverse experiences within genders to challenge stereotypes and encourage inclusivity. For instance, campaigns can feature individuals from various cultural backgrounds, sexual orientations, and gender identities sharing their mental health journeys

Empowerment and Resilience

Empowering individuals to recognize their own mental health needs and seek help when necessary. This could involve providing resources such as helplines, online support groups, or self-care strategies tailored to specific gender-related stressors.

Debunking Myths

Addressing common misconceptions about gender and mental health, such as the idea that men should always be stoic and strong, or that women are more emotionally unstable. Educational campaigns can provide facts and statistics to challenge these harmful beliefs.

Promoting Open Dialogue

Encouraging open conversations about mental health within families, communities, and workplaces. This can help normalize discussions about emotions and mental well-being, making it easier for individuals of all genders to seek support without fear of judgment.

Training and Education

Providing training for healthcare professionals, educators, and community leaders on how to recognize and address gender-specific mental health issues. This can improve access to gender-sensitive care and support services.

By implementing these strategies and others, educational campaigns can contribute to a more inclusive and understanding society where individuals of all genders feel supported in their mental health journey. Conversations about mental health in gender differences provide an opportunity to educate communities about the prevalence and impact of mental illness. This can lead to increased awareness, empathy, and support for those struggling with their mental health.

Normalizing Help-Seeking Behaviour's

When individuals feel comfortable discussing their mental health struggles openly, it reduces the fear of judgment and encourages others to seek help when needed. For example, support groups specifically for men can provide a space for discussing emotions and mental health challenges without feeling emasculated

Sharing Personal Stories

When individuals share their experiences with mental health issues, it humanizes the struggle and demonstrates that anyone can be affected regardless of gender. For instance, public figures or celebrities openly discussing their battles with mental illness can inspire others to seek help and reduce feelings of shame or isolation.

Promoting Inclusivity

Destigmatizing conversations ensure that individuals of all genders feel seen and supported in their mental health journey. By acknowledging and addressing the unique challenges faced by different genders, it promotes inclusivity and reduces the marginalization of certain groups. For instance, creating LGBTQ+-inclusive mental health resources acknowledges the intersectionality of gender and sexual orientation in mental health experiences.

Collaboration and Coordination

Gender-sensitive mental health services collaborate with other healthcare providers, community organizations, and social services to provide holistic care. This may involve referrals to specialized services, such as reproductive health care for women or vocational support for men, to address the intersecting needs of individuals. By taking a comprehensive approach to mental health care, services can reduce stigma and improve outcomes for individuals across genders.

Advocating for Policy Changes

Research findings can inform advocacy efforts aimed at promoting policy changes that address gender disparities in mental health care access and treatment. By providing evidence of these disparities, researchers and advocates can push for policy reforms that reduce stigma and improve access to gender-sensitive mental health services.

CONCLUSION

By recognizing and addressing the unique challenges faced by men and women in navigating mental health stigma and seeking help, we can work towards creating a more inclusive and supportive environment for everyone to prioritize their mental well-being.

There are both similarities and differences in mental health stigmas.

Understanding the similarities in men's and women's perceptions regarding help seeking behaviour's and mental health stigma might help mental health providers and policymakers create focused treatments and programs that break down barriers and promote early intervention for both sexes. Encouraging inclusive, stigma-free environments that put accessibility, cost, and efficacy first can enable people of all genders to get the mental health care they require all while removing the barriers they may be using as excuses to not get help

However, while there are some similarities in mental health stigma and help-seeking behaviours across genders, the differences often outweigh these similarities. Research consistently indicates that societal norms, cultural expectations, and gender roles significantly shape how men and women perceive mental health issues and seek help for them. Understanding and addressing these gender-specific barriers is also crucial in developing effective interventions and support systems to promote mental health and well-being for all individuals, regardless of gender.

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NAVIGATING CYBERBULLYING AMONG ADOLESCENTS: A COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION OF PREVALENCE, RISK FACTORS, CONSEQUENCES, AND TREATMENT APPROACH.

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ABSTRACT

The provision of electronic devices and various Internet applications to adolescents has not only presented them with novel communication opportunities, but has also introduced a range of detrimental social interactions commonly referred to as cyberbullying. In recent years, cyberbullying has garnered considerable attention as a distinctive manifestation of bullying as it poses a significant public health concern worldwide due to its detrimental impact on the psychological well-being of individuals, particularly among children and adolescents. It has been noted that adolescents may play two distinct roles in the context of cyberbullying: as victims and as perpetrators. Recognizing that adolescents involved in cyberbullying, whether subjected to it or engaging in it-report a range of emotional, behavioural symptoms, and school-related challenges. Therefore, this chapter provides an in-depth review of studies covering the definitions, prevalence, and the age and gender dynamics of cyberbullying victimization and perpetration. It further examined the risk and protective factors associated with cyberbullying from the perspectives of both victims and perpetrators. It then extends to the impacts of cyberbullying on adolescents' mental health, highlighting the consequences of both victimization and perpetration. Ultimately, the chapter outlines treatment and preventive strategies for school officials and parents, presenting a comprehensive approach to effectively address this pervasive issue on a global scale.

Keywords: Cyber bullying, Prevalence, Risk and Protective Factors, Psychological Interventions, Adolescents

INTRODUCTION

The provision of electronic devices and various Internet applications to adolescents has not only presented them with novel communication opportunities, but has also introduced a range of detrimental social interactions commonly referred to as cyberbullying (Palermi et al., 2017). Over the past few years, cyberbullying has garnered considerable recognition as a distinctive manifestation of bullying (Patchin & Hinduja, 2010) as possess detrimental effects on the psychological well-being of individuals, particularly among children & adolescents make it a matter of great concern for public health on a global scale (Ranjith et al., 2023).

Throughout adolescence, individuals experience rapid physical, cognitive, and psychosocial changes, which impacts their emotions, cognition, decision-making abilities, and interactions with the world around them (WHO). In addition to the numerous rapid changes, they are also at high risk for experiencing various mental health conditions. Among these, cyberbullying has emerged as a significant concern. Considering the adolescent period as a crucial phase in human development, experiencing bullying during this period is considered as a widespread public health issue that impacts the psychological growth of adolescents and can often continue into their adulthood (Sigurdson et al.,

2015; Maurya et al., 2022). Therefore, the aim of the chapter is to comprehensively examine cyberbullying among adolescents, including prevalence, risk factors, consequences, & treatment approaches.

DEFINITION OF CYBERBULLYING

The concept of "cyberbullying" has its roots dating back to the year 1999 (Englander et al., 2017). Cyberbullying is described as “an aggressive, intentional act carried out by a group or individual, using electronic forms of contact, repeatedly and over time against a victim who cannot easily defend him or herself” (Smith et al., 2018).

As per Englander et al. (2017) the Cyberbullying definition has considered three main criteria: (a) intentional act, (b) power imbalance, and (c) repetition. However, there is a debate regarding the significance of these three criteria to define Cyberbullying (Iqbal & Jami, 2022). Patchin and Hinduja (2006) have omitted power imbalance element in their definition of Cyberbullying. They define it “as the intentional & repetitive infliction of harm through electronic text”. Furthermore, Englander et al. (2017) stated that the victims of cyberbullying suffer adverse consequences, even in cases where the act is not deliberate & not repeated (Iqbal & Jami, 2022). Moreover, Menesini et al. (2012) proposed that repetition is deemed superfluous in the cyberbullying definition (Iqbal & Jami, 2022). Furthermore, it was evident that there exists a certain degree of overlap between cyberbullying and traditional bullying (Ybarra et al., 2014). Hence, it becomes crucial to conceptualize how the Cyberbullying is different from traditional Bullying.

DISTINGUISHING TRADITIONAL BULLYING FROM CYBERBULLYING

Traditional Bullying is characterized by one or more individuals deliberately inflicting pain or harm and consistently targeting a vulnerable peer through aggressive in-person actions (whether physical, verbal, social, or psychological). This dynamic involves a power imbalance and a relationship of dominance and submission that takes place over time. Nevertheless, when this behaviour is executed using information and communication technology, it is commonly known as Cyberbullying (Garaigordobil & Machimbarrena, 2017). Several studies have indicated that while there was a reliable association between Cyberbullying and Traditional bullying (Kowalski et al., 2014), it is crucial to examine cyberbullying separately as it has been found to cause harm that surpasses the consequences of traditional bullying (Englander et al., 2017; Cross et al., 2015). ‘

The existing body of literature recognizes three distinctive features. First, Cyberbullying may result in more enduring effects compared to traditional bullying, given that information transmitted electronically is both permanent and accessible to the public, potentially spreading extensively if not promptly removed (Vandebosch & Cleemput, 2008; Yang & Huang, 2023). Secondly, it can exert a more widespread and distressing emotional harm compared to traditional bullying as a result of the constant connectivity supplied by ICTs, allowing for round-the-clock communication. Consequently, victims may struggle to seek respite from the harassment (Yang & Huang, 2023; John et al., 2018). The third feature is that the unique characteristics of Internet-based computer-mediated communication poses obstacle for intervention. One such challenge arises from the anonymity and deindividuation effect, which diminishes individuals' self-discipline and altruism in the virtual realm compared to the physical world. Consequently, this poses difficulties for cyberbullying interventions in terms of identifying, reaching, and educating both perpetrators and bystanders within the virtual domain (Yang & Huang, 2023; Slonje & Smith, 2008; Cassidy et al., 2013).

UNDERSTANDING THE VARIOUS FORMS OF CYBERBULLYING

Hinduja and Patchin (2007) have identified various forms of Cyberbullying which encompasses the act of sharing threatening or abusive email and instant messages, making derogatory remarks about an individual on a website, or engaging in physical threats or intimidation online. Less severe instances of cyberbullying may involve being ignored, disrespected, singled out, or otherwise bothered. On the other hand, more severe forms of cyberbullying include spreading rumors about an individual, stalking them, or making physical threats towards them. Moreover, Smith and Slonje (2010) have identified seven specific types of cyberbullying that fall into two categories (Suzuki & Asaga, 2012) (*refer to Table 1*).

Furthermore, during cyberbullying incidents, individuals may play two distinct roles: Cyberbullying victimization and Cyberbullying perpetration. Brighi and colleague during their research, focused on the development of a tool titled the European Cyberbullying Intervention Project Questionnaire (ECIPQ) to assess cyberbullying. In their study, the authors took into account both of these manifestations (Brighi et al., 2012). As discussed in the earlier section on cyberbullying definitions, cyberbullying victimization refers to individuals who experience or are targeted by cyberbullying behaviours, while cyberbullying perpetration refers to those who engage in or carry out such behaviours. Acknowledging that adolescents may engage in both roles and experience negative effects on their mental health, in the next sections, we aim to investigate the prevalence, risk factors, consequences, and treatment approaches related to cyberbullying victimization and perpetration among adolescents.

Table 1: Types of Cyber bullying

I. Mobile Phone based Cyberbullying	
1. Mobile phone call bullying	
2. Text message bullying	
3. Picture/video clip bullying	
II. Internet Based Cyberbullying	
4. Email bullying	
5. Chat room bullying	
6. Bullying through instant messaging	
7. Bullying via websites	

PREVALENCE

Cyberbullying is a prevalent issue that children of all ages may encounter. However, it is possible that cyberbullying may manifest later in life, typically around the age of 14, as children begin to devote more time to using their mobile devices (Suzuki & Asaga, 2012). While individuals of different age groups can be victims of cyberbullying, much researches emphasises on middle and high school students (Suzuki & Asaga, 2012).

According to a study conducted in India (Ranjith et al., 2023), it was found that students in the 10th (Approximately 14-15 years of old) standard had a significantly higher likelihood of being victims as well cyberbullying perpetrators compared to students in other standards. This could be attributed to the maturation process of children, where their curiosity in exploring new online tools decreases as they grow older, potentially resulting in a decline in engagement in online bullying and abuse (Ranjith et al., 2023; Jaishwal, 2021). In relation to gender, research has indicated that females are high likely

susceptible to experiencing cyberbullying, whereas males are more prone to participating in electronic bullying (Walrave & Heirman, 2011; Smith et al., 2008). The reasons provided by teenagers for being targeted for cyberbullying exhibit substantial similarities across major demographic groups, although there exist a few notable distinctions. Notably, teenage girls, as a whole, are more inclined than teenage boys to assert that they have encountered cyberbullying due to their physical appearance (17% versus 11%) or their gender (14% versus 6%).

Conversely, a study conducted in India revealed that boys have a significantly higher likelihood, three and a half times greater, of being both victims and cyberbullying perpetrators compared to their counterpart (Ranjith et al., 2023). Considering the overall prevalence, studies from India showed that Cyberbullying victimization prevalence ranged from 14.5% to 17%, whereas the prevalence rate of cyberbullying perpetration varied from 5.8% to 8% among adolescents (Sharma et al., 2017; Ranjith et al., 2023). Furthermore, it is imperative to acknowledge that the prevalence and pattern rates of cyberbullying vary across studies conducted in various countries. According to Kowalski et al. (2014), this variability may stem from various methods for comprehending and quantifying the construct have also produced inconsistent findings about its prevalence and other features.

RISK FACTORS AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS

The following section examines the different risk factors and protective factors that have been found in the literature from the viewpoint of both cyberbullying perpetrators and victims.

Risk Factors for Cyberbullying Victimization

It has been noted that females are more susceptible to cyberbullying victimization compared to males (Zhu et al., 2021), which could be attributed to their physical appearance (Vogels, 2022). Furthermore, mental health issues of adolescents including depression, eating disorders, borderline personality disorder, sleep deprivation, suicidal plans, suicidal ideation (Zhu et al., 2021), social anxiety, perceived loneliness, negative self-cognitions, defectiveness, perceived mistrust, anger, negative body image, previous experiences of psychological distress, traditional victimization, traditional bullying, cyberbullying perpetration (Camerini et al., 2020), prior engagement with cyberbullying and risky online behaviour (Walrave & Heirman, 2011).

Additionally, individuals who spend more time online than their peers (Zhu et al., 2021), a lack of effective negative emotion regulation and/or maladaptive emotional expression strategies (Quintana-Orts & Rey, 2018), low self-esteem (Egan & Perry, 1998), students classified in the self-derogation profile (Palermi et al., 2022). In relation to educational level students with academic problems and Media related factors such as internet access and use, including lack of internet safety procedures, problematic internet use, social network use or internet addiction. Among environmental factors, problematic family history, including low parental academic attainment and harmful family management, a strained bond between parents and children, parental aggression, disputes with siblings, and previous relationships and dating (Camerini et al., 2020), low affection and low involvement (Kowalski et al., 2014), authoritarian parenting style, Low parental support (Dehue et al., 2012) raises the possibility of becoming victim to cyberbullying over time (Camerini et al., 2020).

Risk Factors for Cyberbullying Perpetration:

A systematic review by Camerini et al. (2020) have identified various factors contribute to the perpetration of cyberbullying, with a complex interplay between psychological, behavioral, and environmental influences. Males tend to exhibit higher tendencies towards engaging in cyberbullying, while a history of traditional bullying, particularly within school settings, significantly predicts future cyberbullying perpetration. Individuals who have been the victims of cyberbullying themselves are

more prone to engaging in the perpetration behavior. Psychological factors such as lower levels of social anxiety and the presence of internalizing symptoms like emotion regulation difficulties, depression, anger and anxiety also contribute to the likelihood of engaging in cyberbullying.

Additionally, externalizing problems including aggression, substance use, self-harm, theft and rule-breaking tendencies are linked to cyberbullying perpetration. Attitudes and perceptions, such as favorable attitudes towards cyberbullying, perceived self-control, perceived personal standards, a lack of inhibition moral acceptance of bullying, a sense of behavioral control, invisibility online, and diminished levels of control over oneself and confidence in avoiding detection, play significant roles (Camerini et al., 2020). Media and online behavior, problematic family backgrounds, peer influences, and parenting styles also influence the cyberbullying perpetration (Camerini et al., 2020; Sticca et al., 2013; Walrave & Heirman, 2011; Kowalski et al., 2014; Dehue et al., 2012).

Protective Factors

Numerous protective variables that reduce the likelihood of cyberbullying victimization and perpetration among adolescents have been found in the research. High emotional intelligence, cognitive empathy abilities, Intimate parent-child relationships, authoritative parental styles, Cohesive family environments (Healy et al 2015; Morcillo et al., 2015). Perceived peer support, positive peer attachment styles (Kim et al., 2017), resilience (Hinduja & Patchin, 2017). Emotion control plays a crucial role in buffering against cyberbullying (Hemphill et al., 2015; Hemphill & Heerde, 2014). Within the school context, a favourable school environment, encompassing perceived fairness, resource distribution equity, interpersonal relationship with other students, and teacher, serves as a protective shield against cyberbullying victimization & perpetration (Camerini et al., 2020).

Consequences of Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying significantly affects adolescents, compromising their personal privacy and leading to the emergence of psychological disorders (Zhu et al., 2021), with its potential impact of cyberbullying surpasses that of conventional bullying as it allows perpetrators to maintain anonymity and effortlessly establish connections with children and adolescents at any time (Hutson et al., 2018). Further, research indicates that even minimal experiences of cyberbullying victimization heighten the risk of developing future mental health issues (Fahy et al., 2016). According to the results of an Indian study, it was determined that 61% of adolescents exhibited increased mental and behavioural issues such as behavioural issues, problems with peer, hyperactivity, retaliation, feeling of helplessness and emotional issues (Ranjith et al., 2023). Adolescents who have experienced cyberbullying exhibit a wide range of emotional reactions, including frustration, anger, sadness, worry, stress, fear, and upset (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006; Ortega et al., 2012). These emotional responses vary in intensity and quality (Bottino, 2015). Another study reported that, adolescents who experienced cyberbullying were found to have a 2.07-fold increased likelihood of displaying depressive symptoms and a 2.5-fold higher tendency towards having suicidal thoughts in comparison to their peers who did not subject to victims of cyberbullying (Maurya et al., 2022).

Few studies have highlighted those victims of cyberbullying often experience problematic relationships with their parents (Katzner et al., 2009), exhibit difficulties concentrating at school (Beran & Li, 2005), report lower levels of self-esteem, engage in substance use, suicidal attempts, experience psychosomatic problems, encounter social difficulties, and express feelings of not being safe or cared for in school (Bottino, 2015; Beran & Li, 2005; Palermi et al., 2017; Patchin & Hinduja, 2010). Feeling helpless and powerless in the face of cyberbullying activities can exacerbate sense of anxiety & emotional turmoil, potentially leading to the emergence of depressive symptoms (Bottino, 2015). In addition, it has come to attention that sharing information about an individual that they wish to keep

private can have severe consequences on their reputation, leading to public humiliation, strained friendships, and a negative impact on their social standing. This is especially true during the adolescent years, as the social circle greatly influences the formation of one's identity (Valkenburg & Peter, 2011).

Furthermore, it's not only victims of cyberbullying who are at risk of mental health issues; adolescents involved in cyberbullying perpetration are also susceptible to experiencing psychological challenges. Previous research supports the notion that adolescents engaged in cyberbullying exhibit depression, low self-esteem, anxiety (Kowalski & Limber, 2013) a spectrum of behavioural issues, including conduct problems, drug use, antagonism towards individuals in positions of power, violent and unlawful behaviours, emotional problems, hyperactivity, peer difficulties, and a lack of prosocial behaviour (Rakic et al., 2021; Hinduja & Patchin, 2010; Maurya et al., 2022). Furthermore, school-related issues such as referrals for discipline, suspensions both within and outside of schools (Wright, 2015), school absences, leaving school due to illness, and grades are also correlated with engagement in cyber bullying behavior (Kowalski & Limber, 2013). This underscores the significant association between cyberbullying perpetration and various psychological and academic challenges. The negative impacts of cyberbullying, such as compromised safety, decreased academic achievement, deteriorated mental well-being, and heightened distress, prompted UNICEF to declare that "no child is completely secure in the online realm" (UNICEF, 2017; Zhu et al., 2021).

TREATMENT AND PREVENTION APPROACHES

To effectively address cyber bullying, it requires a collaborative effort among individuals, parents, schools, and communities to create a safe online environment and protect children and adolescents from its harmful impacts (Zhu et al., 2021).

The primary emphasis of the intervention should be on identifying the factors that contribute to cyberbullying and raising awareness about it. Additionally, it is essential to educate adolescents about the detection of potential risks in the virtual realm, the consequences and impact of cyberbullying is equally significant to address this issue effectively (Ranjith et al., 2013).

Utilizing the psychoeducation model can be beneficial in achieving this objective by providing structured education and information to adolescents about cyberbullying, its effects, and strategies for prevention and intervention.

Chillemi et al., (2020) research findings indicates that an internet-based, self-directed psychoeducational program rooted in cognitive behavioral therapy led to enhanced comprehension of coping mechanisms among adolescents, particularly those relevant to cyberbullying. The study also revealed IRCB (Increasing Resiliency to Cyberbullying) program was effective in increasing inclination among adolescents to effectively apply coping strategies such as self-compassion and challenging negative thoughts when faced with cyberbullying incidents. Smith and colleagues (2008) have reported that while some conventional approaches to addressing bullying can also be effective in dealing with cyberbullying, such as implementing curriculum-based initiatives and fostering peer support.

Additionally, targeted interventions that focus on practical measures like contacting mobile phone companies and internet service providers, as well as understanding legal rights in relation to these issues, can prove beneficial. In light of the finding that only 9% of victims reported their victimization to a teacher or adult (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006), it indicates a need for interventions to encourage and facilitate reporting. Possible interventions could include implementing anonymous reporting systems, providing education and awareness programs about the importance of reporting, fostering trusting relationships between students and teachers, and ensuring that there are supportive mechanisms in

place for victims who come forward. Additionally, creating a safe and non-judgmental environment where victims feel comfortable disclosing their experiences is crucial in increasing reporting rates (Holfeld & Leadbeater, 2017).

Additionally, adaptive resilience and a positive appraisal of a challenging circumstance or personal attributes such as self-esteem and self-efficacy have the potential to reduce the psychological harm experienced by victims (Bottino, 2015). In order to decrease the prevalence of cyberbullying offenders, it is essential to foster the capacity for emotional self-regulation by providing suitable emotional management instruction. Additionally, educators, counsellors, and caregivers must possess adequate understanding of emotional management and enhance their emotional management competencies and proficiencies (Ortega et al., 2012).

Research indicates that individuals who fall victim to cyberbullying may employ specific technological tactics to combat such issues, such as blocking the cyberbully's account, reporting the abuse to the website's administrator, and taking a temporary break from online activities (Ranjith et al., 2013; Lapidot-lefler & Barak, 2012; Pieschl et al., 2013; Razjouyan et al., 2018). As highlighted earlier in this paper, cyberbullying is prevalent among adolescents and has significant negative impacts on their mental health.

Therefore, it is imperative to incorporate cyberbullying prevention and intervention strategies across all grade levels in order to adequately tackle this problem (Beran & Li, 2005). Moreover, interventions should begin at an early age, typically around 10 years old (Razjouyan et al., 2018).

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A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF PATHWAY TO MENTAL HEALTH CARE IN LOW MIDDLE INCOME COUNTRIES: AN OVERVIEW OF MENTAL HEALTHCARE PATHWAYS AND ITS UTILITY IN SUPPORT PROVISION FOR EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS.

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ABSTRACT

College experiences are complex and are often filled with diverse and unique stressors that can impact the mental health of students. Young people are at risk for developing a range of mental illnesses due to their complex experiences and difficulties finding appropriate pathways for care. Care pathways are existing pathways to care which individuals use to reach a certain modality of care. In healthcare these pathways tend to be organized and help achieve optimal care provision for patients. The current chapter attempts to provide an overview of existing care pathways for mental illnesses in LMICs and adapt the same for the purpose of organizing care in educational institutions. The authors conducted a comprehensive literature review focusing on care pathways in LMICS and its utility for educational institutions. A total of 127 studies focusing on mental health of college students using Rayyan. A comprehensive inclusion and exclusion criteria were developed to screen the articles. 50 studies were included based on the inclusion and exclusion criterias and a data extraction sheet was used for the purpose of study appraisal. In the chapter, the authors proposed a methodical model of a mental health care pathway designed specifically for educational settings and highlight how it can be used for enhancing mental health outcomes of college students.

Keywords: Mental Health Care on College Campus, Care Pathway, Student Mental Health, Low-Middle Income Countries.

INTRODUCTION

Colleges across the world are facing the challenge of increasing the burden of mental illnesses on campus (Auerbach et al., 2018). Globally, student mental health is an important public health concern with increasing awareness of high prevalence of common mental disorders (CMDs) in this demographic (Bantjes et al., 2022, Duffy et al., 2019, Storrie et al., 2010). College students are at risk for multiple psychiatric conditions including but not limited to depression, anxiety disorders, social phobia, Post traumatic stress disorder and obsessive-compulsive disorder (Pedrelli et al., 2014, Kessler et al., 2007).

Given the context, it becomes imperative to study the mental health concerns of college students and work towards developing initiatives to decrease the student mental health crisis. Help seeking behavior for mental health is a complex process as many factors are involved in deciding when, how and from whom help shall be sought. Mental illnesses are often associated with social stigma posing dual risk to those dealing with it. Persons with mental illnesses face negative consequence of their psychiatric illness (such as occupational, social, physical, and marital issues) in addition to stigma

associated with mental health and illness (such as challenges in accessing quality care, limited employment opportunities, and loss of social status) (Vaishnav et al., 2023, Thornicroft et al., 2022, Javed et al., 2021). The high level of societal stigma makes it vital to arrange care delivery so that mental health treatments are accessible and in a way that motivates people to get help.

For the purpose of organizing care provision in colleges and otherwise in society, care pathway models can be used. Care pathways are defined “as the organized sequence of contacts with individuals and organizations initiated by the distressed person’s efforts, and those of his or her significant others, to seek care or help” (Lilford et al., 2020). In the chapter it is proposed adaptation of care pathway models for educational set ups to improve mental health outcomes in colleges in LMICs.

METHODS

For the purpose of this review, the authors screened a total of 127 studies focusing on mental health of college students using Rayyan. Comprehensive inclusion and exclusion criteria were developed to screen the articles. A literature search was performed between April 1st 2024 to April 29th 2024. Authors utilized the keyword search strategy to find relevant literature. Keywords used included pathways to mental health care, mental health on college campuses, College students’ mental health care in LMICs, Care pathway in LMICs. The papers and articles were shortlisted based on their relevance to the topic. Further, an effort was made to review a wide variety of studies including quantitative and qualitative studies, review papers, systematic reviews and original research articles. A total of 50 studies were included based on the inclusion and exclusion criterias and a data extraction sheet was used for the purpose of study appraisal.

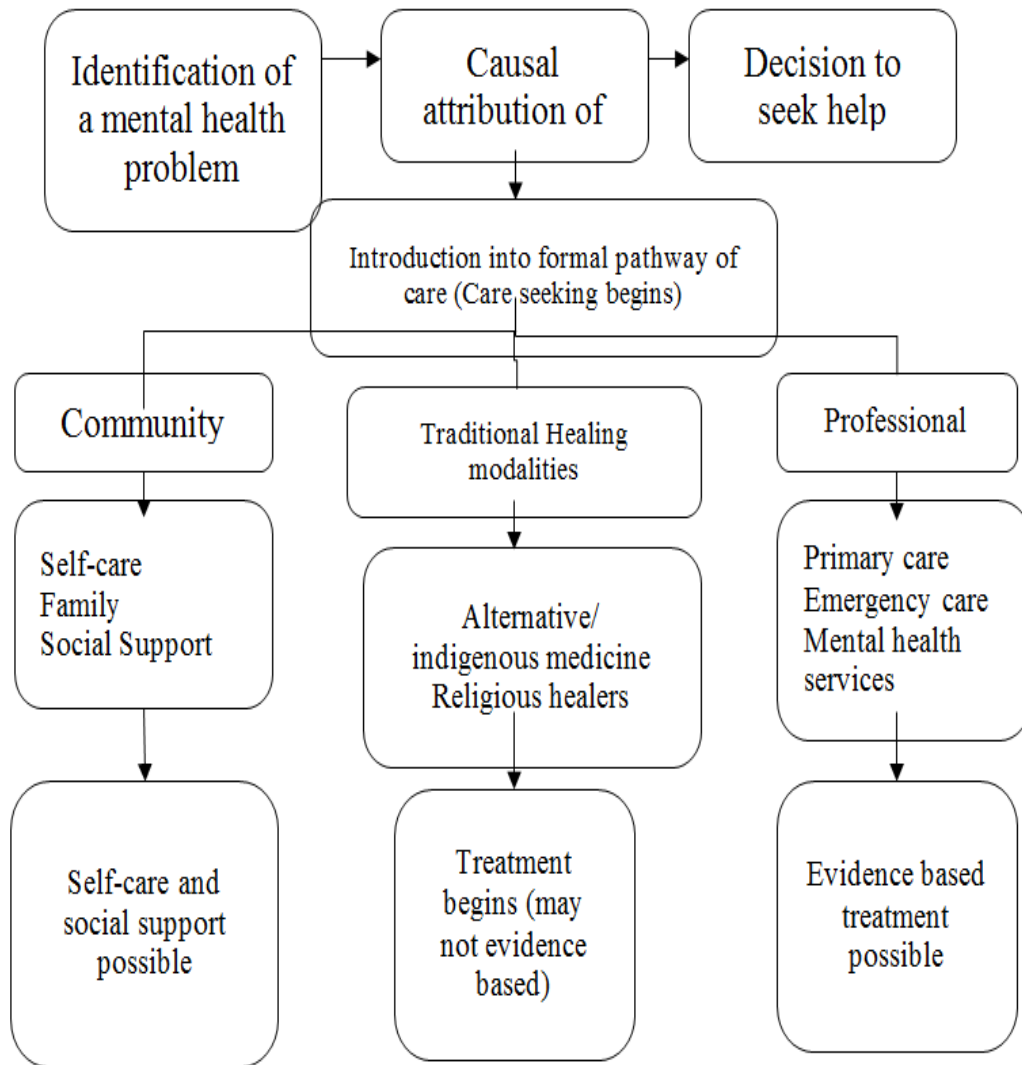
DISCUSSION

To understand how care pathway models can be adapted to educational institutions and utilized for support provision for college students, we must first evaluate the current pathway to mental health care available to any person with mental health issues in LMICs.

EXAMINING EXISTING PATHWAYS TO MENTAL HEALTHCARE IN LOW-MIDDLE-INCOME COUNTRIES (LMICs)

Three categories can be used to group the distinguishable phases of help-seeking behaviour across care routes; these are: 1) Defining the problem 2) Deciding where to seek help 3) Finding a source of support (Ikwuka et al., 2016). Care pathways for mental illness in Low Middle-income countries (LMICs) are often complex and pluralistic in nature and include traditional healing practitioners (Lilford et al., 2020). There are three categories of care provision choices available to individuals among LMICs' pathways to mental health care: a) Community sector b) Traditional healing modalities c) Professional care sector. It is possible that an individual may access multiple practitioners simultaneously in his care seeking journey. Figure 1 summarizes the pathways to mental health care in LMICs.

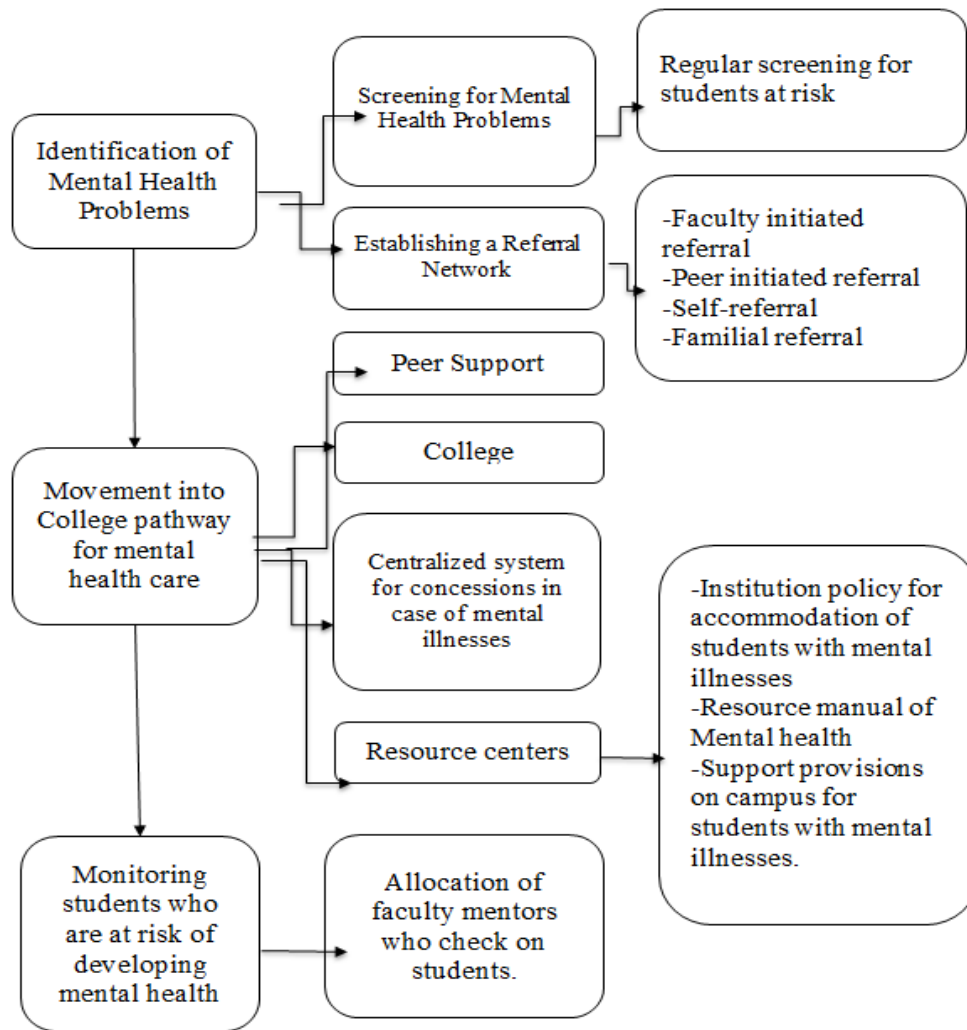
Figure 1: Care Pathway for Mental Health Care in Low-Middle income countries (LMICs)



UTILITY OF CARE PATHWAY MODELS IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION IN LMICs

Research indicates that most mental health disorders have their peak onset during young adulthood (Pedrelli et al., 2014, Kessler et al., 2007). Additionally, college life brings with itself a range of stressful tasks for college students including separation and individuation from their families, additional work and family responsibilities, academic and social stressors (Wasil et al., 2022, Pedrelli et al., 2014). Given the complexities of college life and its impact on the mental health of students, student mental health at university campuses is a responsibility of the educational institutions in which these students are embedded. Creating a structured care pathway where every student can be placed organically is one of the ways to address the mental health of students on college campuses. The care pathway models that are now available for obtaining mental health services can be adjusted to fit the college requirements and environments. Figure 2 outlines the proposed care pathway model for educational institutions.

Figure 2: Proposed care pathway model for educational institutions.



The proposed care pathway model for educational institutions consists of three components: a) Identification of Mental Health problems of students b) Movement of at-risk students into the care pathway of mental health care and c) Monitoring students who are at risk for developing mental health issues.

Identification of Mental Health problems of students

Research has highlighted that population-based screening can enhance help seeking behaviour of college students who are at risk for mental health problems (Downs et al., 2017, Kim, Coumar, Lober, & Kim, 2011). Screening for mental illnesses can happen through web based authorized screening modalities or through sessions in class that exclusively screen students for mental health problems. In addition to regular screening, it is important to set up a cohesive referral network to ensure higher rates of identification of students with mental health issues. The referral network can be divided into referrals initiated by faculties, peers, students themselves or family. All the referred student cases are to be sent to college counselors.

Movement of at-risk students into the care pathway of mental health care.

Once the students at risk are identified, they can then be introduced to the college care pathway for mental health care. The college care pathway for mental health care includes the following components: a) Peer Support Groups b) College Counselor c) Centralized system for concession in case of mental illnesses d) Resource centers. The peer support groups, and college counselors help students navigate their mental health experiences and the centralized system for concession in case of mental illness and resource center helps students become more aware of their rights within the institution and institutional policies for mental health support.

For every case referred to the counselor, the counselor is expected to take at least one intake session to understand the nature of problems that the student is facing and based on his professional expertise decide whether the student needs additional professional help outside of college or can it be managed under the college counseling programs. Every student who is advised additional help should be provided with resource manual orienting them to their options for mental health care and the pathway for the same.

Monitoring students who are at risk for developing mental health issues.

Evidence suggests student-faculty mentoring relationships have positive outcomes including better academic outcomes, professional skill development, professional confidence and identity development and psychological and health benefits (Allen & Eby, 2010). Given the multifold benefits of mentoring, we suggest utilizing the student-faculty mentoring relationship as a means of monitoring student's mental health and well-being.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

We recommend the following strategies to improve mental health outcomes on college campuses to educational institution:

- a) Identify Mental Health issues of students via screening methods.
- b) Maintain and monitor the mental health and well-being of students.
- c) Develop institutional policy for mental health.
- d) Design and promote college mental health care pathways.
- e) Organize mental health awareness programmes to ensure mental health literacy on campus.
- f) Develop capacity of university personnel to deal with mental health issues of students.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we suggest that colleges and universities take proactive steps to ensure mental health and well-being of students. While doing so, it is necessary to keep in mind the socio-cultural context of LMICs as what works in the West may not work here. Student mental health is a public health priority and educational institutions must take active steps in not just reducing the burden of mental illnesses on campus but also in building resilience and well-being of students.

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ADDRESSING CAREER AND FUTURE ANXIETY

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ABSTRACT

College life presents a unique blend of academic pressure, self-discovery, and future planning. In the labyrinth of college life, where uncertainties lurk at every corner, individuals are often confronted with the daunting prospect of navigating through career and future anxieties. This chapter delves into the psychology behind transforming stress into strength amidst the myriad challenges encountered during the academic journey. Life often throws curveballs, compelling us to hit the ground running, adapting swiftly to the evolving landscape. At every juncture, the pressure to make the 'right' decisions loom large, yet the paradox lies in realizing the correctness only through lived experiences. In the era of rapid technological advancements and AI integration, embracing VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, Ambiguity) becomes imperative. Amidst this chaos, self-assessment of abilities assumes paramount importance, propelling individuals to continually learn and upgrade their skills. Through a psychological lens, this chapter elucidates strategies to not only confront career and future anxieties but also to metamorphose them into catalysts for personal and professional growth. It focuses on identifying personal strengths and interests. Instead of fearing the unknown, students are encouraged to view it as an opportunity for skill development and continuous learning. The chapter highlights the importance of lifelong learning in a dynamic world and encourages students to embrace the journey of exploration. By adopting a growth mindset and fostering resilience, college students can transform career and future anxiety into a driving force for personal and professional success.

Keywords: College Life, Career Decisions, Future Anxiety, Uncertainty

INTRODUCTION

College life is a crucible of change, where academic pressures intertwine with self-discovery and the daunting task of planning for an undefined future. This chapter delves into the psychology of anxiety surrounding career choices and navigating an ambiguous future. Building on the metaphor of life throwing "curveballs," the authors explore strategies to transform this anxiety into a catalyst for personal and professional growth. Through the lens of Carol Dweck's Self-Determination Theory, the aim is to examine how fostering a "growth mindset" empowers students to embrace continuous learning and view challenges as opportunities for skill development. This chapter further suggests practical tools for self-assessment, identifying strengths and interests, and cultivating resilience to navigate the complexities of college life and beyond.

College life presents a unique blend of experiences, the thrill of newfound independence, the pressure of academic achievement, and the overwhelming task of charting a future career path. Transitioning from a college student to a career professional involves multiple struggles ranging from financial concerns, identity development to building self-esteem. Amidst this whirlwind of activity, anxieties about career choices and uncertainties about the future are common companions. The authors explore the psychological underpinnings of these anxieties and equip college students with tools to transform them into a force for growth.

The Labyrinth of Uncertainty

Imagine college life as a labyrinth, a complex maze brimming with opportunities, possibilities and challenges. At every turn, uncertainties lurk, prompting the question, “Am I making the right decision?” The irony lies in the fact that the “right” path is often revealed only through the passage of time and lived experiences. This state of ambiguity can trigger anxiety, pushing one into a state of “analysis paralysis” (Kurien et al., 2014).

The Pressure to Make the "Right" Choice

The pressure to make the “right” decision can be paralyzing. Societal expectations, parental aspirations, and the fear of missing out often cloud judgment and create an unsaid pressure to choose what others think is right for them. Career trajectories are rarely linear, though. Skills grow, interests change, and the opportunities themselves are ever-shifting. This inherent uncertainty fosters a sense of vulnerability, leading to anxiety about the future.

Embracing VUCA: Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity

In our rapidly evolving world, characterized by technological advancements and constant disruption, embracing VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity) is crucial (Bennett & Lemoine, 2014). The traditional linear career path is now a relic of the past. Adaptability and a willingness to learn new skills are key to thriving in this dynamic environment. One needs to identify factors that are affecting their career choice which can be internal (like fear of failure and low self-esteem) or external (like parental expectations and financial constraints) and then actively work on overcoming them.

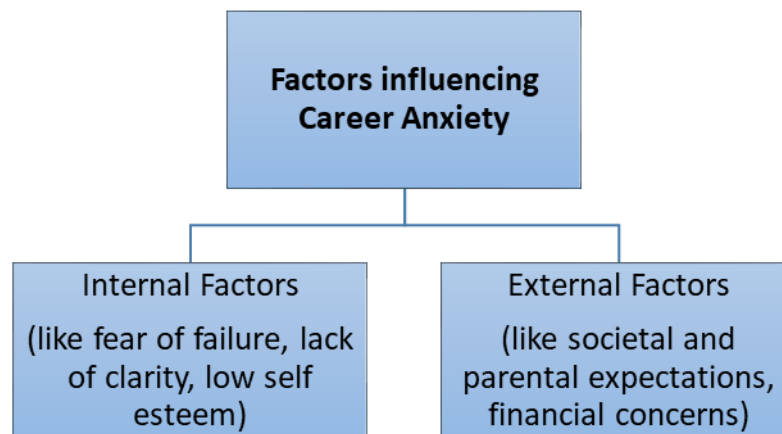


Figure 1: Factors Affecting Career Anxiety

The Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT)

The Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) by Albert Bandura (1986) provides a valuable framework for understanding career development (Wang et al., 2022). This theory posits that career choices are influenced by three factors:

1. ***Self-efficacy***: One's belief in their ability to successfully perform the tasks required for a particular career
2. ***Outcome expectations***: Anticipated rewards and benefits associated with a career path
3. ***Personal interests***: Alignment of one's values and passions with the chosen career

SCCT highlights the importance of fostering self-efficacy through exploration, self-reflection, and acquiring relevant skills.

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their own ability to attain specific goals (Bandura, 1977). Four primary elements influence self-efficacy; social persuasion, physiological and affective states, vicarious learning, and personal performance accomplishments.

In a dynamic and ever-evolving world, the concept of lifelong learning has garnered increasing recognition. Importance of cultivating a belief in one's capacity for development and improvement in fostering resilience amidst career and future uncertainties.

Career exploration

Today's career environment presents individuals with challenging new opportunities, and career exploration may require relatively high levels of confidence in one's ability to creatively integrate the available options into a viable new career path. In today's time, career exploration requires one to chalk out new career paths and integrate existing resources with the skills they possess. Identify what gives you satisfaction, meaningfulness and use all your capacities to the maximum potential.

As the number of career options are increasing so is the difficulty in choosing one. But why stick to one. We can integrate multiple careers together like a psychology student who is also a painter can explore creative arts therapies like art therapy.

The Role of Self-Assessment

The first step in navigating career anxiety is self-assessment. This involves understanding your strengths, interests, values, and personality. Numerous resources available through college career centres can assist with this process. Identifying your strengths allows you to channel them towards career paths that best utilize those skills. Understanding your interests helps you explore fields that genuinely spark your curiosity and motivate you. Examining your values helps you identify the type of work environment that aligns with your core beliefs.

Self-Determination Theory and Growth Mindset

Carol Dweck's Self-Determination Theory (SDT) provides a valuable framework for understanding and managing career anxiety. SDT posits that intrinsic motivation, fuelled by autonomy, competence, and relatedness, fosters well-being and drives achievement (Howard et al., 2021). Within this framework, fostering a "growth mindset" is crucial. A growth mindset encourages the belief that skills and abilities can be developed through effort and learning. On the other hand, a "fixed mindset" holds that aptitude and intelligence are unchangeable characteristics. A growth mindset cultivates resilience and lessens career anxiety by viewing obstacles as chances for personal development.

Transforming Anxiety: From Obstacle to Opportunity

Asking yourself these questions to truly know what you want and where you are heading;

1. Do I know my strengths and interests and is my career choice aligned to it"
2. Am I utilizing the available resources like the college career centre, platforms like LinkedIn"
3. Do I have a clear understanding of my desired career path?
4. Do I have a plan to develop the skills and knowledge necessary for my chosen career path?

5. Do I know about the relevant courses, certifications, or volunteer opportunities to enhance my skills?
6. Am I ready to commit to the effort, time and work required to reach to my desired career goal?
7. Distinguish between short term goals (eg. make enough to pay rent) and long term goals (like becoming an entrepreneur)?
8. Am I focusing on continuous learning and skill development?

Actionable Strategies

Combating career and future anxieties requires a multi-pronged approach. Here are actionable strategies for students:

Self-Exploration

Career assessments: Utilize online or professional assessments to identify strengths, interests, and potential career paths.

Informational interviews: Connect with professionals in your desired field to gain insights into daily tasks and career realities. LinkedIn is a great platform to know about and connect with experts in the field.

Volunteer work or internships: Gain practical experience and explore different career options by interning at your desired organisations, volunteering with NGOs and trying part time opportunities which can be done along side daily activities.

SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Focus on transferable skills: Hone communication, critical thinking, problem-solving, and adaptability, skills valued across diverse careers. Participate in events, take leadership roles, and focus on learning and applying it to the real world problems.

Develop in-demand skills: Research growing industries and acquire relevant skills through courses, workshops, or online certifications. These days internet has made learning easier and more accessible.

Building Confidence

Develop a growth mindset: Embrace challenges as opportunities for learning and growth.

Celebrate small wins: Acknowledge and celebrate your accomplishments, however small.

Build a supportive network: Surround yourself with mentors, peers, and advisors who offer encouragement and guidance. Seek active feedback and work on it. Look for ways to implement what you know and don't hesitate to reach for help when you feel confused, stuck or lost.

EMBRACING UNCERTAINTY

Focus on the present: Channel energy into performing well in your current coursework and gaining valuable skills.

Develop adaptability: Be prepared to adjust plans based on emerging opportunities or personal growth.

View the unknown as an opportunity: Uncertainty fosters creativity and the potential to discover unique career paths. Explore upcoming career options rather than only focusing on the traditional ones.



Figure 2: Transforming Anxiety: Actionable Strategies

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, navigating through career and future anxieties necessitates a multifaceted approach that encompasses self-assessment, continuous learning, and resilience-building. By reframing uncertainties as opportunities for growth and embracing the journey of exploration, individuals can transform stress into strength, ultimately paving the way for personal and professional success.

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ONLINE DATING: CAUTIOUS NOW FOR BETTER WELL-BEING LATER

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ABSTRACT

Online dating has been rising for 2 decades. Adults prefer cyberspace to find their potential partners and move away from the traditional methods of seeking romantic relationships. Thus, this chapter aims to create more awareness among the readers on how to be more cautious and mindful while looking for 'The One' in the world of the internet. The initial part of the chapter discusses some fundamentals of a general dating environment like seeking companionship, commitment, trust, and connections, followed by providing statistics and the prevalence rate of using online dating applications. It then highlights the significance of forming meaningful connections for the overall well-being of humans. The next part of the chapter describes anxiety reduction, self-disclosure, and relationship satisfaction and how these factors play a role in pursuing meaningful bonds using virtual space. The later part of the chapter educates the readers about the trending scams in the name of finding 'the one' in the virtual world and things to look out for. The author has used the existing literature to bring up catfishing/altered self-representation, authentication scams, and personal identity theft scams. The case study approach is then utilized as a piece of evidence to depict the necessity to stay cautious on dating platforms before investing in forming relationships. The later section offers some recommendations for the readers on how to be vigilant before and while embarking on the journey of creating significant bonds in the world of the internet.

Keywords: Online Dating, Meaningful Connections, Well-Being, Cat fishing, Self-Presentation, Identity Theft

INTRODUCTION

Recent years have observed a growing interest in finding romantic relationships online. Especially after the COVID-19 hit, there has been an increased trend in using online dating apps. The features that make online dating more convenient are the surplus of options, proximity, and immediacy (Timmersman & Courtois, 2018). It also offers the psychological ease of reduced anxiety and more self-disclosure thus contributing to building more relationship satisfaction. But before delving deep into the virtual world of romance it is important to understand the necessities of a relationship and the significance of forming meaningful connections in life.

FUNDAMENTALS OF GENERAL DATING

Commitment: is defined as "the intention to stay with a partner for a long term and have a feeling of psychological attachment to that person" (Rusbult, 1980). An individual analyses their relationship before embarking on the journey of commitment. This analysis may include factors like behavior, wealth, physical appearance, intelligence, etc. of the partner. When these factors match the level of expectation of the individual they achieve a sense of satisfaction. This sense of satisfaction orients them towards committing to a long-term romantic relationship.

Companionship: Humans seek a confidant in every stage of life (Holt-Lunstad et al., 2010). Individuals seek compassion in a relationship since it shows that they are being understood. People with compassion are more empathetic and caring towards their partner during times of distress. It is

another factor that contributes to satisfaction, commitment, intimacy, and partner support encouraging them to invest in long-term relationships (Ciarrochi et al., 2024).

Trust: The attachment theory strongly advocates that a major attribute of a long-term relationship is trust. Higher levels of trust manifest happiness and love between couples. Biologically, trust is also important from the perspective of evolution for the survival of a being. High trust is also seen to show confidence in a partner to provide a sense of safety and security. Trust between partners can take a relationship a long way (Kleinert et al., 2020).

SIGNIFICANCE OF MEANINGFUL CONNECTION

Humans are social animals and look for social contact through every stage of life. A satisfactory level of commitment, companionship, and trust are a few factors that contribute to having high-quality social relationships. Literature has highlighted the importance of having high-quality meaningful intimate relationships in a person's overall well-being. It is seen to contribute to elevated levels of mood, reduced levels of loneliness, higher self-esteem, and lower risk of depression and anxiety (Lomanowska & Guitton, 2016).

With the advancements in technology, the channels of building relationships have altered, and researchers have had their doubts about the usage of the Internet to foster romantic relationships (Lomanowska & Guitton, 2016). However, it is now clear that forming and maintaining online romantic relationships is in many ways similar to traditional ways of dating. To understand this, it is important to understand the structure of a dating platform.

The structure of online dating is such that it provides a digital platform to showcase oneself. Users input their personal information like location, age, body type, height, educational qualification, income, other demographic information, and profile picture. Some platforms also allow participants to write what is called a 'Bio' about themselves, where users can write paragraphs about themselves describing their interests (Rosen et al., 2008). Conventional dating begins with noticing the physical appearance of a person followed by discussing interests and similarities. There exists a factor of hesitation and anxiety in the process of knowing a person. On the contrary, in the online setup, this barrier of hesitation and anxiety is easier to break as users feel safer on the internet. Additionally, online dating starts with self-disclosure from both sides, and the process of meeting face-to-face is reached once the bond is created. When both are involved in self-disclosure, they can know more about each other and examine the traits of the other person. It opens the door to looking for traits like trustworthiness, commitment, and compassion which form the necessities in relationship building.

MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS IN VIRTUAL SPACE

Anxiety reduction and self-disclosure are two factors that allow searching for a compassionate partner, to develop trust and commitment. These factors facilitate the exchange of information between two users and can help in filtering the potential partners from the crowd.

Anxiety Reduction: The Internet opens avenues for communication with reduced anxiety and fear of judgment. A study conducted by Knox et al. (2001) found that online space provides a platform for reduced anxiety. It enables the users to ask more personal questions and know more about the other person. It is also witnessed that online dating environments are a good space for socially anxious people. Thus, online dating supports them by introducing to them a space with decreased anxiety (Stevens & Morris, 2007).

Self-Disclosure: Individuals find it easier to better express themselves on the internet. This phenomenon takes place as the user feels much safer in cyberspace than in face-to-face setups. This argument is also strengthened by studies that noted that people feel more distant and anonymous and

thus feel more comfortable sharing personal information. This catalyzes the process of self-disclosure hence users find themselves more connected to a person sitting on the other side of the screen as compared to someone sitting on the next seat (Rosen et al., 2008). McKenna et al. (2002) noted that more self-disclosure or “true self” in the online space helped in establishing intimate relationships more easily.

With the ease of access to online dating applications and less effort in forming connections, people prefer the virtual environment to search for ‘the one’. The usage of these platforms is on the rise, and it is important to study the global presence.

PREVALENCE RATE AND SOME STATISTICS

Online dating platforms are gaining popularity as more and more people are turning to the internet to find love. It was noted that in 2018 there were 22% of adults between the age of 18-24 years seen using dating platforms actively as compared to 5% in 2013. Since the launch of Tinder in 2012 there have been 340 million downloads of the app and a total of 3 billion swipes were recorded as of March 2020 (Gerlach, 2021). Online dating also generates huge revenue for the key players in the industry which are ‘Bumble’, ‘Hinge’, ‘okcupid’, and ‘Tinder’. Malik (2024) mentioned some prevalent figures recorded in India are;

- a) It is estimated that India will generate a total of \$104.9 Mn in revenue through dating apps in the year 2024.
- b) By 2028 it is predicted that there will be 28.8 Mn users of dating apps.
- c) There are 3 times more men than women on the dating platform.

However, with the ease of using dating platforms come a lot of challenges where one needs to be vigilant and cautious in the world of the internet. Although the internet feels like a safe space one must also know that this provides a platform for the fraudsters to present a false sense of self. It is important to draw attention to the trending scams related to online dating.

TRENDING SCAMS

Here are 5 common scams that everyone must look out for while using online dating apps (n.d., Adt).

Catfishing/altered self-presentation: or pretending to be someone else. This is the kind of person who is too good to be true. They will tell you everything you need to hear and lure you into their love to get your personal or financial information. This can also be a person who has a personal rivalry with you and intends to humiliate or embarrass you after arranging an online or offline meet-up.

Money Scams: These are another set of true lovers found on dating platforms. They try to be nice and friendly and break the barriers of self-disclosure just to make the other person feel valued. Slowly, they start using people for materialistic benefits or make stories about a sick family member or a dog and attempt to make money. Once they receive money they ghost or vanish.

Authentication Scams: This is the set of people who are behind the bank balance of the other person. They will pretend their 2-factor authentication is not working and will request a favor by letting them use your phone number for the authentication. They will then send an OTP or a code and try to access the phone for data and other important information.

Personal identity theft: These are the people who talk to the other person and keep a note of all the personal information shared with them. They later use all the personal data to threaten innocent user, divulge certain confidential information about them, and put their identity at risk. This can lead to

intense cases where bank accounts, social security numbers, or even credit card details are leaked or compromised.

Phishing: These are the people who will engage either in a romantic or friendly chat for a while. They will then request the other user to click on a link that will look like the link of a social media platform. Once the button is clicked the device is exposed to malware or virus that can track all the stored data.

CASE STUDY

A case study based on a real-life experience can describe the seriousness of scams taking place around the world.

Case of money scam: A 25-year-old male based out of Delhi met a female on Bumble. After a few chats, they decided to meet at the request of the girl at a place considered safe from the girl's perspective. It was a bar in the Rajouri area of Delhi.

Situation: During the meeting, the female ordered drinks and snacks for both of them, and the bill was for INR 15,886. During the payment of the bill, the cafe personnel tapped the card 4 times stating that their machine was not working. The victim then went to use the washroom and by the time he returned the bill was not on the table and the female had already escaped the scene.

Later: After reaching home the male tried to contact the female, but her number was not reachable. He also noticed that the Bumble profile was no longer accessible and realized the scam.

Scam: The bars and cafes in Rajouri hire young females to reel in men through dating apps. The woman then requests to meet at a particular bar of her choice where the staff is already aware of the scam. The female then orders food and drinks, and the couple is charged in thousands. On approaching the staff about the scenario, they declined any help and charged the male with the actual bill amount. As soon as the bill is paid the female escapes the scene leaving the guy behind and leaving him confused.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO STAY VIGILANT.

In the online world, one must use their proper judgment to while interacting with a stranger. There are certain risks involved while meeting for the first time. It is recommended to look out for the self when playing in this field. One step to take while actively using dating apps is to wait until a comfort zone is created. It is advised to meet a stranger when one is comfortable. It is always okay if one wants to wait longer and wants more time. Once comfortable, it is suggested to schedule the meeting in a public place, and also download a self-security app on the phone before meeting the person. At any point during the date if one feels uncomfortable it is good to bow out politely. Other recommendations are about staying sober for the duration of the date, planning transportation by self, informing someone about the planned date, and lastly, always using a unique phone number to contact the online date. All these recommendations will help in the long run if things do not go as planned (n.d., Adt).

CONCLUSION

To summarize, it is a common trend in today's world to seek a romantic relationship online. Humans need secure social relationships to maintain overall well-being. What constitutes a high-quality relationship is the trust, companionship, and commitment between partners. With advancements in technology, people have drifted away from conventional methods of finding love. Online space provides a space for reduced anxiety and higher self-disclosure. Both factors contribute to finding meaningful relationships online. However, with the benefits of the cyber world, there are certain red flags that users need to stay vigilant of. It is always advised to be watchful and make proper

judgments when meeting a stranger in an online or offline setup. Lastly, one also needs to be aware of the trending scams to look out for and plan a date cautiously.

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TECHNOLOGY USAGE AND CYBER BULLYING AMONG STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Today with increase in use of technology among young population, cyber bullying is a prevalent issue worldwide. Bullying has always been a problem but now the perpetrator has access to the victim outside of the school, college or workplace. On one hand social media is widely used by the youth for staying socially connected and expressing themselves, they find themselves exposed to anonymous strangers. Databases such as PubMed, google scholar, psych info and psych articles were navigated with appropriate keywords. Originally 51 papers were looked at before narrowing down based on the inclusion criteria. The research data shows that male students were more likely to be the perpetrators and victims of cyberbullying. Females employed psychological abuse more than males. Aggressors displayed delinquency, substance abuse and poor parent-child relationships. Victims reported feelings of anger, sadness, hurt, embarrassment, isolation, humiliation and helplessness. Victims also experienced depression, social phobia, poor concentration, burnout, low efforts in job search, decrease in academic performance and social sensitivity. Students from minority groups, lower social strata, perceived as weak, disabled were more likely to be cyber bullied. Factors like anonymity, cultural elements, low academic pressure, desire to dominate contributed to perpetrators indulging in cyber bullying. In some cases, a victim of traditional bullying can become a perpetrator of cyber bullying. Tech giants like face book, Instagram and twitter have been at work to combat cyber bullying. Interventions such as employing Artificial intelligence tools such as NLP and NLC is being navigated. Additionally, tools that prevent offensive remarks before being posted are also being looked at. Precisely, targeting offensive comments in a conversation is tough due to the contextual nature of conversations. All these have been elaborated upon in detail.

Keywords: Cyber Bullying, Technology Usage, Online Bullying, Harassment, College Students

INTRODUCTION

In research conducted in Canada, about half of internet users reported knowing at least 1 person who has been a victim of cyber bullying (Mitchell, Ybarra & Finkelhor, 2007). The victims typically receive racist, threatening and hate messages (Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008). A study on undergraduate students concluded that about 30% report undergoing cyber bullying for the first time at college (Kowalski et al., 2012). Cyber bullying tendencies were found more in male students than in females (Nabuzoka, 2003) Nancy Willard categorised cyber bullying into 7 types, viz. flaming, online harassment, cyberstalking, denigration, masquerade, outing and exclusion.

Cyber bullying is a manifestation of traditional bullying transferred into technology (Sandhu & Kaur, 2022) with adolescent aggression culminating with electronic communication (Hinduja & Patchin, 2007). Anonymity is the main obstacle in combating cyber bullying. In particular, cyber bullying is more severe than traditional bullying because of the inability to escape the situation and then presence of bystanders who has access to private content (Bhat, 2008; Campbell, 2005). In 2017, India was found to be 3rd largest in terms of cyber bullying cases. According to McAfee's survey, 50% of youth in India had undergone cyber bullying to some degree (Moirangthem et al., 2022).

METHODOLOGY

A rigorous systematic search was done to understand the nature and factors associated with cyber bullying. Additionally, the impact on victims and perpetrators was also looked into. Interventions undertaken to minimise the effects were analysed. Appropriate publications were identified from databases such as PubMed, Google scholar, PsycINFO and Psych articles. In order to access research papers, keywords (cyber bullying, technology usage, college students, cyber bullying in students, online harassment) were used. Initially 51 research papers were identified and were assessed for fulfilment of the inclusion criteria. Papers on cyber bullying on adults have been excluded. Papers studying about cyber bullying on high school and college students have been included. Out of 51 papers 24 papers met the inclusion criteria.

RESULTS

Prevalence

In a study conducted on 579 university students from Istanbul, cyber bullying occurred through electronic media (59.8%), internet (20.7%), and mobile phone (27.7%). Cases with Unfamiliar perpetrators (88.1%) were higher than cases with familiar (11.9%) ones (Turan et al. 2011). Students with a casual attitude towards cyber bullying encountered more hate speech and cyber bullying (Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008). Not much gender differences were found but males reported increased cyber bullying on online gaming platforms (Kowalski et al., 2012). In 2007, a study reported 1 in 3 adolescents were victims of cyber bullying. While 1 in 5 adolescents being the cyber bully (Li & Q, 2007). 1/3rd undergraduate students have experienced cyber stalking (Spitzberg & Hoobler, 2002) and developmentally delayed adolescents have undergone online sexual harassment (Katz, 2002) In U.S, New Jersey, victims of cyber bullying and cyber stalking are 10% and 9% respectively (Kraft & Wang, 2010). On the contrary a study in university of turkey, report high prevalence rates of cyber bullying (55.3%) (Dilmac, 2009). A study on UG female students observed that cyber bullying was not considered a serious issue. Awareness was low in terms of familiarity and resources for victims (Brewer et al., 2014).

Cyber Bullying Cases

In Quebec, Canada, a 15-year-old teenager was subjected to humiliation and distress when his private video was made viral by his classmates. His parents filed a lawsuit and sought justice for their son (Snider & Borel, 2004). Calabazas high school, California saw gossips, racist and threatening remarks as part of a website which affected the whole school (Paulson, 2003). On a MOO, 2 female characters were forcibly instructed to perform sexually degrading acts upon themselves. This was done by a male user (Dibbell, 1996). Graphic sexual abuse was enacted by a male user on a multiplayer computer game (Reid, 1994). In 2022, a university student was arrested for sending morphed explicit pictures of faculty members. He admitted that many such content has been going on during educational sessions (Moirangthem et al. 2022).

A 15-year-old in New Jersey confessed to engagement in cyber bullying. "I did not like the girl, so I said something to her and left nasty messages in her online journal, signed anonymous, saying nasty things," she said (Hinduja & Patchin, 2006). Phoebe prince (15-year-old) committed suicide after being bullied online repeatedly (Johnson, 2010). Tyler Clemente (18-year-old) jumped off the George Washington bridge. His private videos with another male had been leaked by his roommate (Friedman, 2010). A case which grabbed attention was the boy's locker case, where morphed images of minor girls was being circulated on an Instagram group. Additionally, explicit language and objectionable language was also part of the conversations. The group admin and 20 others were arrested by the police (Moirangthem et al., 2022).

Impact faced by victims and perpetrators

Victims of online and offline harassment led to symptoms of depression (Thomas, 2006). Cyber bullying displayed a negative association with burnout and effort in searching for a job (Kowalski et al., 2012). Victims report reduced concentration, decrease in academic performance, decline in interest in school and increase in absence to school/ college (Limber, & Small, 2003). Additionally, tardiness, truancy (Ericsson, 2001; Richardson, 2003), suicidal ideation, eating disorders and depression (Hunter & Borg, 2006) were also found. Victims also engaged in violent acts towards others and self under severe cases.

Perpetrators experience substance abuse, delinquency and poor parental-child relationship (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004). Increase in emotional distress, fear and anger were typical responses shown by victims of cyber bullying. Victims also displayed feelings such as embarrassment, hurt and self-blame (Hinduja & Patchin, 2006). Anxiety and low self-esteem were predominantly found among cyber bully victims. In a study on adolescents from Finland, physical issues such as headache, recurrent abdominal discomfort and sleep issues were reported among victims (Sourander et al., 2010). A sense of helplessness (Thomas, 2006) and social phobia (Raskauskas & Stoltz, 2007) were the repercussions of cyber bullying.

Victims of cyber bullying were also inclined to develop anxiety disorder as adults (Stapinski et al., 2014). The feelings of powerlessness, revenge, being exposed, humiliation and isolation were prevalent in victims of cyber bullying (Singh & Dhillon, 2024). Even though not much gender differences were found in terms of impact of cyber bullying, males reported increased work, social and personal life disruption. On the other hand, females displayed increased obsessive compulsions, interpersonal sensitivity, psychoticism and hostility (Moirangthem et al., 2022).

Factors contributing to Cyber bullying

Engagement in traditional bullying and cultural aspects show relationship with cyber bullying behaviour. Anonymity has been the main contributor to enable cyber harassment. Lack of social accountability makes it easier to engage in hostile behaviour (Li & Q, 2007). Male students were more likely to be the victims and aggressors. Since aversive tactics are a norm among male social engagement (Pellegrini, et al. 2000). A study reported that bullying is a universal issue in countries like Norway, Sweden, Spain, Australia, Canada, Japan and USA. Factors that predict cyber bullying in a positive direction are aggression and securance. Endurance and affiliation were found to be negatively associated (Dilmac, 2009).

Usage of pseudo names and fake email addresses makes it tough to determine the perpetrator's identity. Hiding behind a screen makes it easier to use malicious words that one would avoid face-to-face (Hinduja & Patchin, 2006). According to traditional criminological theory, bullying in any form, is a learned behaviour (Akers, 1985). It can be an expression of a suppressed trait like low self-esteem (Gottfredson & Hirschi) or a strain response (Agnew, 2020). Psychopathic traits (Nocera & Dahlen, 2020), loneliness (Yubero et al., 2017) anti social behaviour and self-esteem were linked to cyber bullying behaviour (Shaikh et al., 2021).

Coping Strategies

Many students reported to be uncomfortable in sharing details of cyber bullying to a authority figure. They preferred sharing with a parent, teacher or a friend. Few students preferred to keep it to themselves. The reasons attributed to non-disclosure were thoughts that disclosure won't be of much help, not knowing whom to seek help from and not wanting to confide (National Children's Home, 2005). Removing self from the online platform, confiding with trustworthy individuals were the most

followed ways of coping (Hinduja & Patchin, 2007). Reporting to officials, retaliating back, speaking to the perpetrator to stop were additional options that were considered (Smith et al., 2008).

DISCUSSION

To ensure a safe online learning environment NCERT and UNESCO has implemented do's and don't guidelines to be followed. Indian government has laws in place to enable a secure online space for young people since they are the most affected. The IT act, 2008 developed in 2008, handles cybercrimes. Section 66(d) mandates 3 years prison, 1 lakh compensation. Section 66(e) ensures 3 years of prison time and a compensation of 3 lakh. This particular act targets people engaging in intentional violation of privacy by leaking private images. Section 67 mandates 5 years imprisonment, 10 lakhs monetary fine for offensive messages online (Moirangthem et al., 2022).

“When the victim is in initial stages they have not been totally exposed to full extent of negative outcomes. Stepping in at this stage by having a conversation with the aggressor and tapping into their empathy might help in some situations. Some aggressors are not aware of the extent of damage they are causing. Creating an awareness of the same may help. Establishing an environment where students feel safe, and reinforcement is done from an early age to insinuate that undesirable behaviours such as abuse and unparliamentary words are not acceptable. This enables students to not engage in such activities later on in life since cyber bullying or any forms of bullying is mostly done for social status and social dominance” (Singer, 2020).

The Indian cybercrime co-ordination centre (14C) scheme aims to deal with problems face by people on social media by prohibiting unnecessary usage of social media and creating awareness among youngsters. National cyber crime reporting portal is an initiative by indian government that enables women and children to register complaints regarding cyber bullying and immediate action is taken by local police assistance (Kaur & Saini, 2023).

According to Pew Research 18-24 is the most high-risk group for cyber bullying victimisation. Students who are different, weak belong to minority groups, LGBTQ+ and low on social hierarchy are the most susceptible to cyber bullying by their peers. Identifying offensive remarks accurately while also looking for context is a difficult task. A group led by Karthik Dinakar, developed an algorithm which categorised groups of words by detecting them according to themes. The group further, built a software that compares posts online to the information stored in competNet, a database which helps networks make sense of human language.

Identity Guard partnered with cyber bullying experts and Megan Meler to enable parents to keep their children's information secure without invading their privacy. NLP and NLC has been employed to detect cyber bullying instances. Facebook uses deep text which gauges text among many posts within seconds. Instagram makes use of an image filter to detect offensive content posted via image. Apart from these social media giants, a online gaming company riot gamers, employs their online community for identification and suggestion of action against the perpetrator. Artificial intelligence is used to filter out recommendations. Offensive comments have seen a 40% reduction in this company.

Before a offensive content is posted online, it can be stopped. This is possible through usage of Rethink. This app was developed by a teenager and is able to detect a derogatory word while it is being typed on the device. OCDD is another method of detecting cyber bullying. It was developed to detect offensive content on twitter. Similar to Rethink, Instagram is developing a feature that flashes a warning if an offensive content is typed on the keyboard. It does not block the user.

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THE DISCLOSURE DILEMMA: THE DILEMMA REGARDING QUEER IDENTITY DISCLOSURE AMONG LGBP COLLEGE STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This phenomenological study explores the dilemma experienced by college students regarding queer identity disclosure in their academic institutions. Ten participants aged 19-22 identifying as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, or Pansexual pursuing higher education were recruited using purposive and snowball sampling methods. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis helped identify four themes: The Filtering Process, Factors Encouraging Disclosure, Factors Encouraging Concealment, and The Impact of Dilemma. The results of this study highlight the role of faculty members and the college environment, giving us insight into how we can make academic spheres more inclusive to queer students.

Keywords: Queer Identity Disclosure, Coming out, Queer Identity Disclosure in Academic Institution, Disclosure Dilemma, Disclosure Decision-Making

INTRODUCTION

While homosexuality is no longer criminalized in India, most queer individuals still fear judgement on disclosure (Joshi et al., 2022). Since our society remains predominantly a heteronormative one, if one wants to make their queer identity known, they must 'come out,' often an important part of queer identity development, acting as a stepping stone to increase the possible integration of their public and private identities, establishing networks of social support (Cass, 1979; Coleman, 1981-82; D'Augelli, 1994; Grace, 1992, as cited in Ranade, 2018; Pandya et al., 2013; Troiden, 1989; Waagen, 2022).

Unlike many stigmatized social identities, queer identities are relatively concealable. While this may seem beneficial, concealing information requires a huge amount of monitoring and vigilance about possible risks, making it cognitively taxing (Suppes et al., 2011). Due to this, disclosing one's queer identity can cause a considerable amount of dilemma. In this paper, 'disclosure dilemma' refers to the dilemma regarding queer identity disclosure, and can be best understood as a multilayered decision-making process involving strategy formation, perception of risk, and fear of discrimination while deciding whether to disclose or conceal queer identity along with ways to do the same (Banik et al., 2019; Maji et al., 2023).

Disclosure helps queer individuals express themselves more freely, find social support, and increase social information available during social interactions, benefitting physical and mental health (Chaudoir & Fisher, 2011). Therefore, it is important to understand the factors influencing the disclosure dilemma. While there have been studies exploring the disclosure dilemma in Indian workplace settings, there is a lack of studies exploring this dilemma in academic settings.

METHOD

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of LGBP college students navigating the dilemma regarding queer identity disclosure in Indian academic settings.

Research Question

How do LGBP college students experience the dilemma regarding queer identity disclosure in their academic institutions?

Research Design

Phenomenological research design was used to understand the experience of the phenomenon of the disclosure dilemma in academic settings.

Sampling

The study population comprised students pursuing their undergraduate or postgraduate studies, who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, or Pansexual. The sample consisted of 10 participants belonging to the middle-class socio-economic background. The participants' demographic details are represented in Table 1. Sampling was done using purposive and snowball sampling methods. The inclusion criteria were as follows:

1. Indian citizenship.
2. Identification as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, or Pansexual.
3. Enrolment in an offline higher education program in India.

Table 1: Participant Demographic Breakdown

	Number	Percentage
Gender Identity		
Cisgender Man	4	40
Cisgender Woman	3	30
Non-binary	3	30
Genderfluid	2	67
Transmasculine	1	33
Sexual Identity		
Lesbian	2	20
Gay	2	20
Bisexual	3	30
Pansexual	3	30
Age		
19	2	20
20	1	10
21	2	20
22	5	50
Religion		
Buddhist	1	10
Christian	3	30
Hindu	3	30
Hindu & Buddhist	1	10
Irreligion	2	20

City of Residence		
Bengaluru	3	30
Manipal	1	10
Mumbai	1	10
Pune	2	20
Thane	2	20
Vadodara	1	10
Ongoing Course		
Graduate	6	60
Postgraduate	4	40

Data Collection and Storage

Data was collected in January and February of 2024. Informed consent was obtained, demographic details were collected using a form, and participants were asked to pick a pseudonym, which was used to identify them for the rest of the process to ensure confidentiality. Data was collected through one-on-one in-depth semi-structured interviews conducted either offline, online via ZOOM, or telephonically, predominantly in English. These interviews were recorded and transcribed. A backup of all the data collected was maintained using a restricted Google Drive folder.

Data Analysis

Data was analyzed using the Braun & Clarke model of Thematic Analysis.

Ethical Considerations

The following precautions were used to protect the rights of the participants:

1. Participants were informed about the voluntary nature of their participation in writing.
2. In writing, the participants were informed about the data collection methods and the provisions made to protect data and ensure confidentiality.
3. Informed consent was obtained.
4. Transcripts were sent to the participants for review before analysis.

Result and Discussion

With the help of thematic analysis, four themes were identified. Table 2 represents the social identity profiles of the participants.

Table 2: Participants' Social Identity Profile

	Age	Sexual Identity	Gender Identity	Course
P1	19	Lesbian	Woman	BSc (Liberal Arts) Honors
P2	21	Lesbian	Woman	BA (Liberal Arts) Honors
P3	22	Gay	Man	BA in Multimedia and Mass Communication
P4	19	Gay	Man	BCA
P5	22	Bisexual	Woman	MSc Clinical psychology
P6	20	Bisexual	Non-binary	BBA
P7	22	Bisexual	Man	MSc Psychology (Specialization: Industrial)
P8	22	Pansexual	Non-binary	MA European Literature and Culture
P9	22	Pansexual	Man	MSc Forensic Science (Specialization:

				Criminology)
P10	21	Pansexual	Non-binary	BA in Multimedia and Mass Communication

Note. P = Participant; BSc = Bachelor of Science; BA = Bachelor of Arts; BCA= Bachelor of Computer Applications; MSc = Master of Science; BBA = Bachelor of Business Administration; MA = Master of Arts.

1. THE FILTERING PROCESS

1.1. Observing Attributes

Guided by their past experiences, participants observed a variety of attributes during interactions including political alignment, cultural and educational background, open-mindedness, media consumed, curiosity, politeness, religious beliefs, affiliation with other queer people, as well as their ‘vibe,’ in line with previous studies (Bowling et al., 2016; Banik et al., 2019; Evans & Broido, 1999; Mansh et al., 2015; Sahoo et al., 2023; Stevens, 2004). This process was distinctly described by some to be their “metric,” “filter,” “mental checklist,” or process of “screening the people.”

1.2. Gauging Queerphobia

In line with previous findings (Evans & Broido, 1999), the extent of queerphobia was also gauged, usually by introducing a queer-related topic to the interaction and observing reactions, for example, making references to queer culture, making a comment about the queer community, initiating conversation about a queer celebrity or influencer, making ironic queerphobic jokes, and indirect disclosure hinting at queer identity. Engagement in and reactions to queerphobic humour were also observed, in line with previous findings (Mansh et al., 2015).

2. FACTORS ENCOURAGING DISCLOSURE

2.1. Social Support

In line with previous studies (Biswas et al., 2022; Bowling et al., 2016; Evans & Broido, 1999), disclosure helped strengthen relationships and in building social support networks. Support from peers and friends regarding disclosure also helped participants feel assured about not being alone in facing possible negative consequences, in line with previous findings (Stevens, 2004).

2.2. Disclosure by Other Queer People

In line with previous studies (Garvey et al., 2018; Stevens, 2004), witnessing disclosure by other queer people, including peers and faculty, also helped some participants gather the courage to disclose, mostly when well-received.

2.3. Perceived Necessity

In line with previous findings (Mansh et al., 2015), necessity of disclosure was also taken into consideration, including the nature of the course, subject being discussed, and having a significant identity-related contribution to the class discussion. Moreover, most preferred disclosure over concealment on being asked, especially in the case of a non-binary participant to prevent misgendering and deadnaming, in line with previous findings (Waagen, 2022).

2.4. Inclusive Attitude of Faculty

The faculty’s inclusivity was gauged through inclusivity conveyed in language, steps taken to prevent misgendering and deadnaming, discussions encouraged in class, response to disclosure by queer students, and political and religious beliefs expressed in class, in line with previous studies (Furrow, 2012; Mansh et al., 2015; Mehra & Braquet, 2007; Stevens, 2004). Treating queer identities

nonchalantly like cis-heterosexual identities was also perceived to be inclusive, contrary to a 'don't ask, don't tell' environment as noted in previous research (Evans & Broido, 1999).

2.5. Perceived Support of College Authorities and College Environment

In line with previous studies (Evans & Broido, 1999; Mansh et al., 2015; Mehra & Braquet, 2007), participants felt more secure to disclose when they perceived the college environment to be inclusive and anticipated discriminatory actions to be reprimanded. Intentional hiring of queer-friendly faculty and staff members also helped, echoing previous findings (Stevens, 2004).

2.6. Authentic Expression

In line with previous studies (Coleman, 1981-82; Evans & Broido, 1999), authentic expression was found to be a major motive, along with avoiding feeling reserved or suffocated around people, especially friends. Some also expressed wanting to disclose to be true to themselves, even if it lacked necessity. Moreover, six were firm on being authentic about their queer identity on Instagram, describing it as a liberating experience and an outlet for expression. These findings are in line with previous research (Rhoads, 1995).

2.7. Normalization through Exposure

Some also disclosed to normalize queer identities and raise awareness, in line with previous findings (Evans & Broido, 1999). Two also spoke about being open about their queer identity on Instagram for the same reason.

2.8. Higher Engagement in Academics

Two participants expressed how being able to be open about their identity in class enhanced their performance in class, in line with previous findings (Garvey et al., 2018). One also mentioned how disclosure helped them take more interest in class, improve their grades, and avoid absenteeism, tying in with previous findings (Chakrapani et al., 2021).

3. FACTORS ENCOURAGING CONCEALMENT

3.1. Apprehension Regarding Queer Identity Being Used Against Them

Use of their queer identity against them meant different things to different participants. One expressed how their religious/spiritual opinion was invalidated by a classmate by bringing up their queer identity. Most others feared being outed to other peers or their parents, tying in with previous findings (Stevens, 2004).

3.2. Stigma

In line with previous studies (Chakrapani et al., 2021; Evans & Broido, 1999; Mansh et al., 2015; Stevens, 2004), stigma and anticipation of stigma, including rejection, exclusion, and hatred, acted as another motive.

3.3. Fear of Academic/Career Discrimination

In line with previous studies (Mehra & Braquet, 2007; Stevens, 2004), one participant narrated how their fear of academic/career discrimination increased since they witnessed a faculty member having to leave their position allegedly due to being queer. One also expressed choosing to fit in to avoid the impact of possible exclusion on academics, in line with previous studies (Bowling et al., 2017; Evans & Broido, 1999; Mansh et al., 2015). Moreover, most LinkedIn users shared they weren't open about their queer identity on there due to apprehension of being denied employment.

3.4. Fear of Physical Aggression

Fear of physical altercation, as mentioned by three of five students staying away from their families also discouraged disclosure, acting as an extension to previous findings (Rhoads, 1995).

3.5. The Downside to Disclosure

Some disadvantages experienced by participants post-disclosure included being reduced to their sexual identity, i.e., being “the gay best friend,” and sexualization of a bisexual woman participant by straight women. Some participants also noted being avoided, or being blocked on Instagram by peers post-disclosure in line with previous findings (Evans & Broido, 1999). Walking on eggshells around participants, presumably to avoid ‘saying the wrong thing’ was also observed. Lastly, some participants experienced microaggressions and queerphobia to varying degrees from peers and faculty, both offline as well as on the class WhatsApp group chat.

4. THE IMPACT OF DILEMMA

4.1. Detrimental

Seven out of the eight participants who admitted to experiencing the disclosure dilemma expressed it had a detrimental impact on them. In line with previous studies (Rostosky et al., 2022; Tomori et al., 2016), three mentioned how ‘the filtering process’ during interactions brought about anxiety and hypervigilance. In line with previous studies (Achar & Gopal, 2021; Evans & Broido, 1999), some also mentioned how it was mentally draining to conceal their queer identity during interactions, especially by modifying their behaviour. One mentioned that while they experience the dilemma, they do not experience detrimental effects from it since they’re firm about non-disclosure.

4.2. Protective

The disclosure dilemma also had a protective impact by preventing disclosure to unsafe individuals, which may have consequences worse than those caused by the disclosure dilemma, echoing previous studies (Evans & Broido, 1999; Stevens, 2004). Around seven participants mentioned not having many negative experiences due to precautions taken.

4.3. Inexperience of the Dilemma

Notably, two participants expressed unfamiliarity with the experience of the disclosure dilemma in their academic institution. They attributed this to the supportive and accepting nature of their department or academic institution making them feel secure, similar to previous findings (Stevens, 2004).

CONCLUSION

This study exploring the experiences of LGBP college students revealed four themes helping us understand ‘the filtering process,’ some factors encouraging disclosure and concealment, and the impact of the experience of the disclosure dilemma.

The importance of cultivating a queer-friendly college environment in helping authentic expression by queer students and improved engagement in academics is made evident through the results. The need for raising awareness to aid students as well as the faculty be more queer-friendly is also highlighted, which will help normalize queer identities, reduce stigma, and make disclosure easier for queer students. The importance of ensuring protection against discrimination and taking steps to prevent misgendering and deadnaming is also recognized.

Some limitations of the study include the lack of binary transgender participants and insight into the experiences of queer students belonging to lower and upper socioeconomic backgrounds, selection of participants from only six Indian cities, and data analysis being done by one researcher. Future research can focus on queer individuals belonging to demographics not included in this study. Further, action research must be conducted to identify culture-specific measures that can be taken by academic institutions to improve the academic experience as well as the quality of life of their queer students.

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ABOUT THE EDITOR



Aashna Narula is an accomplished Professional in the realms of Psychology Education, mentoring, and Entrepreneurship. With a passion for empowering the next generation of psychologists, she brings a wealth of experience and a track record of success that she is eager to share with the vibrant academic community at your esteemed university. As a Research Trainer, Aashna Narula has had the privilege of guiding and inspiring over 200 psychology students, equipping them with the skills not just to write research papers but to successfully publish their work. Her commitment to the professional development of students extends beyond the classroom, as she has been actively involved in teaching both Psychology and Entrepreneurship, fostering a unique blend of academic and practical knowledge. In 2015, Aashna Narula founded the Psychology Coaching Institute, "Psychopedia," providing comprehensive coaching from +1 to UGC-NET, along with diverse training programs in the field of Psychology. With a heart dedicated to the advancement of Psychology and a vision that aligns seamlessly with commitment to excellence, Dr. Narula is eager to contribute to the field of research.

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