

Mental Health of Undergraduate Students in Aizawl City in the Post Covid Period

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Abstract

We live in a modern world where changes occur daily in almost everything. The fast-changing economy has led to the development of technology; thus, every individual tries to adapt himself/herself to these changes to meet the present needs and demands of life. Therefore, having a well-balanced personality and a positive view of life is necessary to overcome stress, anxiety and frustration which affects the mental health of a person. It is important for everyone to have a strong sense of self-awareness and self-understanding in order to adapt to changing circumstances and maintain a positive outlook on life.

Keywords: Mental Health, Undergraduate Students, Post covid, Social media.

Introduction:

Due to drastic changes and developments in the economy, everyone tries to keep up with these changes, not only in terms of technology but also in society. Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, WhatsApp, Instagram have a significant impact on people's lives which has led to an increase in competition among everyone, particularly among the youth. Not only in academic areas but in fashion as well, there is an endless battle to maintain or to keep up with the newest brands, styles and trends. Although this competition can be used as a positive stimulus, it is harmful for the mental health of the youth as it has led to increase in stress, anxiety, frustration, jealousy and depression etc. Most of the students are the youths who are still young and who are not expected to have too many experiences in life as compared to adults. Young minds can be considered as the most useful minds in the society. So, students in

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today's digital age have suffered a lot with this type of illness/pressure such as pressure to be successful, pressure to become a fashionista, pressure to be popular, uncertainty about the future, exam pressure and parental pressure etc. Many people have come to seek the help of psychologists and psychiatrists to promote healthy behaviors, to prevent diseases and to improve the quality of life. This is because it is difficult to live and try to change one's lifestyle under this kind of pressure.

The World Health Organization has declared 10th October as 'World Mental Health Day' because it feels that this will be beneficial to reduce the mental illness that people are suffering from by raising awareness about the mental health issues and support those who are dealing with these issues worldwide. As per the latest data reported by the National Crime Records Bureau (2021), 1,64,033 Indians have committed suicide, an increase in the total numbers by about 7.2% as compared to the previous year. According to VOLCOMH data, Mizoram has experienced over 100 suicide occurrences since 2017. Actual suicide rates are two to four times greater than those that are officially reported. Therefore, mental health and mental problems have become an important issue in society today.

Need and Importance of the Study

Positive mental health enhances academic success, as a positive mindset, emotional well-being, and self-confidence can improve focus, motivation, and overall learning outcomes. High levels of stress and anxiety can negatively impact academic performance of students, as the pressure to excel in academics can contribute to increased stress levels. Mental health disorders, such as depression, anxiety, ADHD, or eating disorders, often face challenges in academic pursuits, affecting cognitive functioning, attendance, and coursework completion.

Effective coping strategies for managing stress and emotional challenges are more likely to be employed by students. These strategies include seeking social support, practicing mindfulness, and engaging in self-care activities. Academic struggles can adversely affect mental health, as students who consistently underperform may experience lower self-esteem, increased anxiety, and concerns about their future.

Strong support systems, including family, friends, and access to mental health services, are essential for helping students navigate the challenges of both academics and mental well-being. Time management is essential for maintaining a healthy balance between academics and mental health, as struggling students may experience high levels of stress and poorer academic performance.

Lifestyle choices, such as sleep, diet, and physical activity, significantly impact mental health and academic performance. Early intervention and access to mental

health services are vital for addressing mental health issues before they negatively affect academic progress.

Cultural and socioeconomic factors also play an important role in the mental health of the students. Providing support and resources for students to maintain good mental health is crucial for educational institutions and policymakers. Reducing stigma around mental health issues and creating an environment where students feel comfortable seeking help promotes mental well-being and academic excellence.

Research and data collection from local universities and colleges can help understand the mental health status of undergraduate students in Aizawl City. This research can inform evidence-based policies and interventions to support students in the region.

Objectives of the Study:

1. To find out the mental health of Undergraduate students in Aizawl city.
2. To find out the mental health of female and male students.
3. To find out the mental health of 1st semester students.
4. To find out the mental health of 3rd semester students.

Definition of Key Terms

Mental Health: The absence of illness as a condition in which an individual tries to seek a balanced performance in a daily task and allows people to manage life's challenges, develop their potential, study and work effectively, and bring changes in society is called as mental health.

Undergraduate Students: Undergraduate students refer to students studying B.A in different colleges in Aizawl.

Post Covid: post covid period refers to the period after the covid pandemic i.e., after 2020.

Social Media: Social media refers to Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Instagram, Tiktoketc

Methodology:

Method of the study: The investigation is descriptive in nature. The research methodology focuses on the mental health of undergraduate students in Aizawl city.

Population and sample: The population includes all Undergraduate students studying in different colleges in Aizawl city.

The sample consists of 100 students in total. Out of these, 46 are from 1st Semester and 54 from 3rd Semester; 57 are female and 43 are male. All the sampled students belong to Arts stream.

Tools used: Mental Health Inventory by Jagdish and Srivastava was used to find out the mental health of the students. It is divided into 6 dimensions:

1. **Positive self-Evaluation (PSE):** It includes self-Confidence, self-acceptance, self-identity, feeling of worth-whileness, realization of one's potentialities, etc.
2. **Perception of Reality (PR):** It is related to perception free from need distortion, absence of excessive fantasy and a broad outlook on the world.
3. **Integration of Personality (IP):** It indicates the balance of psychic forces in the individual and includes the ability to understand and to share other people's emotions, the ability to concentrate at work and interest in several activities.
4. **Autonomy (AUNTY):** It includes stable set of internal standards for one's action, dependence for own development upon own potentialities rather than dependence on other people.
5. **Group Oriented Attitudes (GOA):** It is associated with the ability to get along with others, work with others and ability to find recreation.
6. **Environmental Mastery (EM):** It includes efficiency in meeting situational requirements, the ability to work and play, the ability to take responsibilities and capacity for adjustment.

Major Findings of the Study:

1. Findings regarding the Mental Health of Undergraduate Students

Table 1: Mental Health of Undergraduate Students

Sl No.	Dimensions of Mental Health	Score of Male Students	Interpretation of Results	Score of Female Students	Interpretation of Results
1	Positive Self Evaluation (PSE)	24.44	Poor	22.49	Very Poor
2	Perception of Reality (PR)	18.3	Poor	19.42	Poor
3	Integration of Personality (IP)	28.02	Poor	27.98	Poor
4	Autonomy (AUNTY)	15.9	Average	14.4	Poor
5	Group Oriented Attitudes (GOA)	23.55	Poor	24.33	Very Poor
6	Environmental Mastery (EM)	23.13	Poor	22.3	Very Poor
7	Overall Mental Health	134.72	Poor	132.24	Very poor

From the above Table no.1, it was found that the scores of male students are poor in PSE (24.44), poor in PR (18.30), poor in IP (28.02), average in AUNTY (15.90), poor in GOA(23.55) and poor in EM (23.13).

The scores of female students are very poor in PSE (22.49), poor in PR (19.42), poor in IP (27.98), poor in AUNTY(14.40), very poor in GOA (24.33) and very poor in EM(22.30).

The overall mental health for male students is Poor (134.72) and for female students, it is Very poor (132.24). Therefore, it can be concluded that both male and female students have low mental health. However, the mental health of male students is slightly better than female students.

2. Findings regarding Mental Health of 1st Semester Students

Table 2: Mental Health of 1st Semester Students

Sl No.	Dimensions of Mental Health	Score of Male Students	Interpretation of Results	Score of Female Students	Interpretation of Results
1	Positive Self Evaluation (PSE)	24.69	Poor	21.65	Very Poor
2	Perception Of Reality (PR)	16.65	Very Poor	19.73	Poor
3	Integration Of Personality (IP)	28.52	Poor	28.04	Poor
4	Autonomy (AUNTY)	14.79	Poor	14.6	Poor
5	Group Oriented Attitudes (GOA)	24.04	Poor	25.17	Poor
6	Environmental Mastery (EM)	23.73	Poor	22.69	Poor
7	Overall mental health	135.87	Poor	135.04	Poor

From the above table no.2 It is found that the score of 1st semester male students is poor in PSE (24.69), very poor in PR (16.65), poor in IP (28.52), poor in AUNTY (14.79), poor in GOA (24.04) and poor in EM (23.73).

The score of female students is very poor in PSE (21.65), poor in PR (19.73), poor in IP 28.04), poor in AUNTY (14.60), poor in GOA (25.17) and poor in EM (22.69).

The overall mental health of 1st semester male students is poor (135.87) and for female is poor (135.04). Therefore, it may be concluded that both male and female students have low mental health.

3. Findings regarding Mental Health of 3rd Semester Students

Table 3: Mental Health of 3rd Semester Students

S1 No.	Dimensions of Mental Health	Score of Male Students	Interpretation of Results	Score of Female Students	Interpretation of Results
1	Positive Self Evaluation (PSE)	24.15	Very Poor	23.05	Very Poor
2	Perception Of Reality (PR)	20.2	Poor	19.2	Poor
3	Integration Of Personality (IP)	27.45	Poor	27.94	Poor
4	Autonomy (AUNTY)	17.2	Average	14.26	Poor
5	Group Oriented Attitudes (GOA)	23	Poor	23.76	Very Poor
6	Environmental Mastery (EM)	22.45	Poor	22.11	Very Poor
7	Overall mental health	133.4	Very poor	130.35	Very poor

From the above table no.3, It is found that the score of 3rd semester male students is very poor in PSE (24.15), poor in PR (20.2), poor in IP (27.45), average in AUNTY (17.2), poor in GOA (23) and very poor in EM (22.45).

The score of female students is very poor in PSE (23.05), poor in PR (19.20), poor in IP (27.94), poor in AUNTY (14.26), very poor in GOA (23.76) and very poor in EM (22.11).

The overall mental health of 3rd semester male students is very poor (133.4) and for female, it is also very poor (130.35). Therefore, it may be concluded that both male and female students have very low mental health.

Discussion and Conclusion

The present study reveals that all the sampled students have poor mental health. It was further found that the mental health of the female students was lower than the mental health of male students. This may be attributed to the fact that today's youth are using social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, WhatsApp, and Instagram for staying in touch with family and friends. This has led to an increase in lack of interaction not only with family but also with friends. They content themselves in their own room and what they saw on social media, the feeling of boredom let them neglect reality. Whatever things they need is provided to them by their parents. Most parents do not want their children to suffer or lack anything, every parent tries their best to give their children the best of everything. This has led to feelings of entitlement, selfishness, laziness, materialism, etc. which has resulted in lack of confidence, lack of independence especially after covid. Students seem to lack strong principles, self-control, morals and values. With the ongoing changes in the society, students of today have suffered a lot of pressure not only from family, but also from society. They feel the pressure to look good, be fashionable, be successful, be popular and so on. This pressure has led them to indulge in drugs, alcohol, sex etc.

Female students have lower mental health as compared to male students. This may be because the fast-changing trends in society, fashion, technology, etc. has led to changes in the lifestyle resulting in increase in competition in terms of gadgets, aesthetics, clothing, keeping up with the trends and brands, comparison among their peers. While promoting women empowerment all over the world, it cannot be denied that females are considered as less strong in terms of physique, emotions, intellect, etc. as compared to males. So, the investigator found that female students have faced more difficulty in adjusting with the ongoing changes in society.

The study found that the mental health of 3rd semester students is poorer than the 1st semester students. This may be because those who are studying in 3rd semester are students who have gone through online teaching mode because of the covid pandemic. It is clear that interaction plays an important role in teaching learning process. 3rd semester students started online learning from higher secondary school(class XI) without receiving any proper interaction with their teachers and their classmates. During the covid era, students are excusing themselves by using smartphones and computers a lot for learning. However, effective learning cannot take place without proper interaction and this has resulted in lack of attention span, inability to accept reality, etc. which affects their mental health.

Mental health is not a new thing and not only a western concept anymore. It is something which is a serious issue and is relevant even in Mizo society. Today's youths need proper guidance and counselling in order to have well-balanced lives. From the above results, it is evident that awareness and promotion of mental health in schools, colleges, universities and different institutions is a must.

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