

DECODING THE SILENT ASSASSIN; A STUDY ON STRESS IN DENTAL STUDENTS

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Abstract: The aim of this study was to investigate the perceived sources of stress and the role of parents in its etiology among dental students in a private dental school in India. A self-reporting questionnaire (SRQ), prepared by WHO, for measuring stress level, was administered to 256 dental students. The main sources of stress were found to be fear of facing parents after failure, full loaded day, and fear of failing course or year. Students whose first choice of admission was dentistry experienced less stress than students whose first choice was another field. Also the students who joined dentistry due to parental pressure showed a greater stress than those who joined of their own accord. Male students experienced greater stress than females. The results of this study indicate that a congenial environment needs to be created for dental education and parents also need to be counseled against forcing their children to join an educational program that is not of their choice.

Keywords: Dental Students, Bachelor of Dental surgery (BDS), Stress, Gender, Suicide.

Introduction

Stress is a ubiquitous experience of life, and though seemingly easy to comprehend, is surprisingly difficult to define. Hans Selye [1], an endocrinologist, in 1930 was the first to employ the term “stress”. Stress can be defined as a series of physiological responses and adaptations which are manifested in an individual, when he/she is unable to cope with the perceived threat to his/her mental, physical, emotional or spiritual well being [2]. The demanding nature of Health Sciences (medical & dental) curriculum, requires an unflinching commitment to excellence as well as a deep empathetic demeanor, on the part of health sciences students, so as to become a successful, practitioner, at the time

of passing out of college. The requirement of such high academic rigor inevitably produces stress in the young impressionable, adolescent students at the threshold of adulthood.

The various factors that induce stress include homesickness, heavy workload, sleep deprivation, financial concerns, information overload and career planning [3]. These factors tend to have a negative effect in the academic performance, physical health, and mental well being, making the students prone to a stressful existence [4,5]. The continuation of such stress in the students is harmful not only to them, but can also have adverse effect on patient care [6].

A high level of perceived stress makes the young students prone to the risk of suicidal ideation, para-suicide and suicide. Suicide has been reported to be second only to accidental death as a cause of mortality in young men across the world [7], and the leading cause of death for those between 15-34 years. [8].

Aim & objectives

1. To study the prevalence of stress among BDS students.
2. To study the demographic profile, those are indicative of perceived stress in the BDS students.
3. To find effective solutions to allay the perceived stress.

Materials & Methods

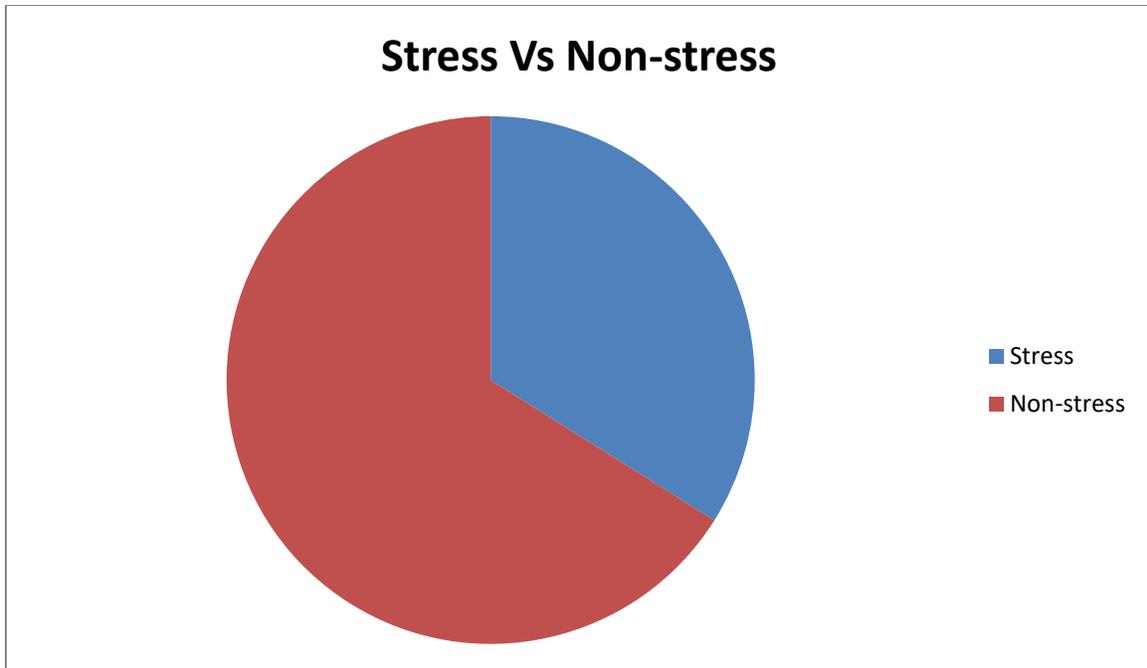
This cross-section study was conducted over dental students of a private Dental College, in Bhubaneswar, Odisha. Students were considered randomly after getting informed consent. Both general data, reflecting the demographics of the BDS students, as well as the Self-reporting questionnaire (SRQ) were given to measure the stress level. The SRQ, is a set of 20 questions prepared by WHO, to help researchers study the stress level. A more than 10 yes response was considered as an indicator of stress. The study design was approved by the ethics and research committee of the Institute.

Data Analysis:-

Data was analyzed using percentages, in the study.

Results & Discussion

1. Total number of cases studied was 256 and out of it only 96 were found to be on stress as per the SRQ which is approximately 37% of study population.



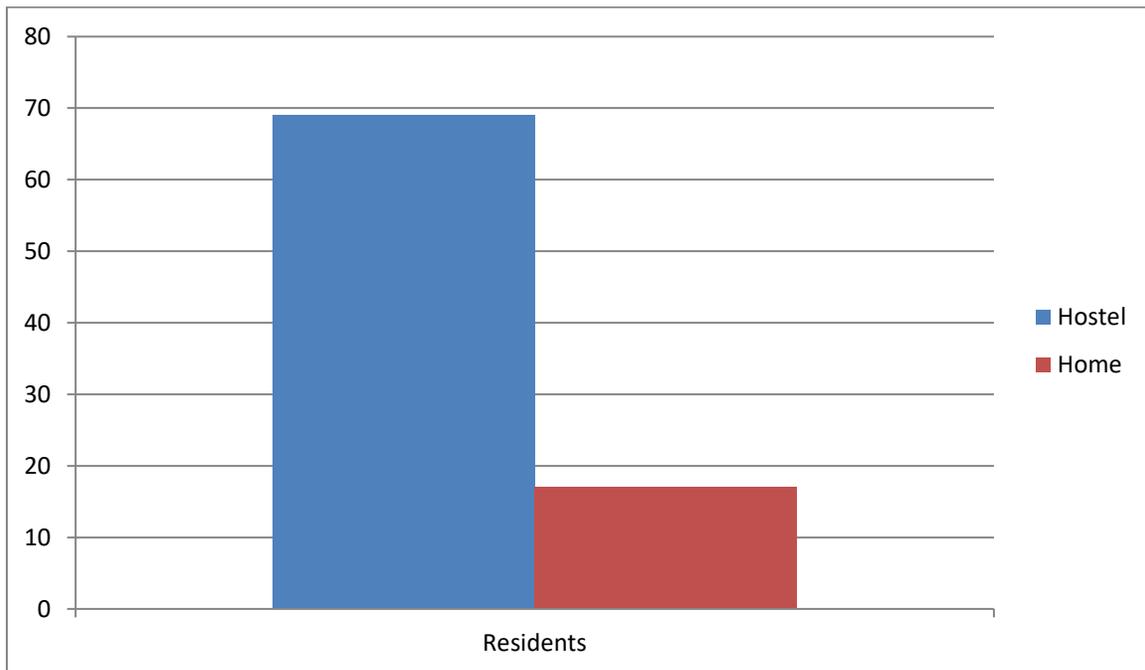
2. Age group most susceptible to stress were 18-21 year (75%), followed by 21-30 year (21%)
3. Male to female ratio was 1:5.



The gender of Dental students, under stress, has been a subject of continuing study. Many studies report that female students tend to be under more stress, anxiety and depression, as compared to male students [9,10], other studies however report that, there occurs no significant gender difference, in the prevalence of depression [11,12]. Stress causes a number of physical, emotional, cognitive and behavioral changes and plays a major part in influencing the quality of life. In the 21st century, the way of life has

become more mechanical and materialistic with chronic stress gnawing into every aspect of human existence. The incidence of depression and stress tend to be significantly high in females as per certain studies [13].

4. Students, who are Hostel boarding (69%) were more susceptible to stress than students whose residence was in their homes, with family (17%). Students from nuclear family (15%), were more vulnerable to stress compared to students from joint family (2%).



5. Awareness of vast nature of BDS course was found in 86% students against only 10% of students who were oblivious to the fact among the stressed students.
6. Reasons for joining BDS, ranged from, for the service of mankind (43%), for huge earning (32%) and due to parents wish or pressure (21%).

The motives of the students, in joining Health Science College ranges from business-oriented to service to the patients. Females tend to more concerned for serving people, while males tend to more influenced by the business prospects of Health Science education [14,15].

7. Most of the stressed students were able to cope with the BDS course (66%) against few who were found wanting in coping. (30%)
8. Most of the stressed students had admission in their second attempt of BDS entrance exam (59%), followed by first attempt (27%) and third attempt (10%).

The academic rigor, required to get into Dental College is also a very stressful exercise. The stress that a student goes through, while preparing for the Dental Entrance test may continue to linger in him/her after getting admission in the Dental College. Those students who took multiple attempts, to get in to Dental College, may continue to be under stress, as they pursue their studies.

Conclusion

Timely intervention, to prevent untoward incidents in the Dental Student community is the need of the hour. This study on the prevalence of stress in Dental students, may be helpful to healthcare administrations to formulate policies to combat stress, anxiety and depression, among Dental students.

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