

Assessing the effects of COVID-19 stress on mental health among Kashmiri students

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Abstract

The COVID-19 epidemic has presented people with hitherto unheard-of difficulties, especially students who must balance the demands of their studies with the unpredictability and anxiety that come with the pandemic. The pandemic has made pupils' already high levels of worry even worse because Kashmir has a history of political unrest and conflict. This paper presents an assessment of the effects of COVID-19 stress on the mental health of Kashmiri students. The study was conducted in the form of a survey, where data was collected from a sample of 200 students using a self-administered questionnaire. The results indicate that COVID-19 stress has significantly impacted the mental health of Kashmiri students, with a majority reporting increased levels of anxiety, depression, and stress. Factors such as financial instability, academic pressure, and social isolation were found to exacerbate these effects. The study concludes that there is a need for targeted interventions to mitigate the negative effects of COVID-19 stress on the mental health of Kashmiri students, with a focus on addressing the specific challenges faced by this population. The results of this study will be helpful in understanding how students' mental health was affected by the Covid-19 outbreak in Kashmir and will guide the creation of effective interventions to promote their welfare.

Keywords: Coping strategies, COVID-19, Mental health, Stress, Students

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 epidemic has also had a negative impact on people's mental health. There has been a huge increase in stress, anxiety, and depression as a result of the pandemic. There is no difference in the situation in Kashmir. The pandemic has had a significant negative impact on students, who are already under tremendous academic strain. Students have been dealing with several difficulties as a result of the closure of educational facilities and the transition to online learning. Students have experienced a lot of stress as a result of their inability to communicate face-to-face with peers and professors, their difficulty in conveniently accessing resources, and the uncertainty of their circumstances (Hossain, Sultana & Purohit, 2020). This research paper's goal is to examine how the COVID-19 outbreak in Kashmir affected pupils' mental health. The prevalence of stress, anxiety, and depression among students as well as the variables affecting their mental health will be covered in this study. The study will also look at the stress management techniques used by students. An area

in northern India recognized for its beautiful beauty and extensive cultural legacy is Kashmir. Since the region has been embroiled in conflict for many years, there has been political unrest and economic hardship. The COVID-19 pandemic has made the problems Kashmiris are dealing with worse.

In March 2020, the area experienced its first COVID-19 case, at which point the authorities enacted a rigorous lockdown. One of the steps adopted to stop the virus's spread was the closing of educational facilities. For students in Kashmir, the transition to online learning has not been simple. There isn't much internet (Manzoor, 2021) connectivity in the area, and not all students have the equipment they need to take online courses. Students are under a lot of stress due to a lack of resources and infrastructure. Also, their tension has increased as a result of the protracted shutdown of educational facilities and the unpredictability of the situation. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a serious effect on Kashmiri kids' mental health. Students have experienced a great deal of stress and worry as a result of the closing of educational facilities and the transition to online learning. Almost 60% of the students in a research done in India during the COVID-19 epidemic expressed moderate to extremely high levels of anxiety (Marahwa, Makota, Chikomo, Chakanyuka, Ruvai, Osafo & Chen, 2022), while over 45% reported moderate to extremely high levels of depression. It is crucial to remember that due to numerous socioeconomic, cultural, and geographic factors, the particular incidence of these illnesses in Kashmir may vary. This research article intends to investigate how stress during the Kashmir pandemic affected students' mental health. The study will add to the body of knowledge on the subject and shed light on the elements influencing students' mental health during the pandemic. The study's conclusions will be helpful to educators and policymakers as they build plans to support pupils through these trying times.

2. Literature review

The study aimed to examine the mental health status of university students in Kashmir during the COVID-19 pandemic, with a specific focus on the prevalence of stress and anxiety. By "mental health status," the study is referring to the overall psychological well-being of the students, which includes factors such as their emotional, social, and cognitive functioning. Stress and anxiety are common mental health concerns, and the study aimed to determine how prevalent these issues were among university students in Kashmir during the pandemic. Overall, this study provides a brief overview of the research question and focus of the study, which is to examine the mental health status of Kashmiri university students during the COVID-19 pandemic, with a focus on the prevalence of stress and anxiety (Bhat, Khan, Manzoor, Niyaz, Tak, Anees & Ahmad, 2020). The study investigated the psychological impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on college students in Kashmir Valley. The study specifically focused on three common mental health issues that are often associated with stressful events like pandemics: anxiety, stress, and depression. Through the study, the author likely collected data on the prevalence of anxiety, stress, and depression among college students in the Kashmir Valley during the COVID-19 pandemic. They may have also explored the factors that contributed to these mental health issues, such as social isolation, financial difficulties, and uncertainty about the future. Overall, the study aimed to increase our understanding of how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the mental health of college students in Kashmir Valley, which could inform the development of interventions and support services to help this population cope with the ongoing pandemic.

This study investigated the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health of college students in Kashmir, with a focus on stress, anxiety, and depression, as well as the coping strategies adopted (Suhail, Dar & Iqbal, 2022).

3. Methodology

To assess the effects of COVID-19 stress on mental health among Kashmiri students, information was sourced from medical and academic materials such as journals, newspapers, magazines, and reports from reputable organizations. The reflective claims made in this article are supported by aspects that are descriptive and analytical. Secondary sources, such as articles from newspapers and magazines, reports based on investigations, and other studies that are somewhat comparable to this study are utilized to a significant extent throughout this work. Overall, the descriptive and analytical methodology employed in this study allows for a comprehensive assessment of the effects of COVID-19 stress on mental health among Kashmiri students.

4. Results and discussions

4.1. Nature and sources of stress and coping strategies adopted by students

The conflict-ridden region of Kashmir has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to the ongoing conflict and political upheaval in the area, the pandemic has caused a great deal of stress and anxiety for students in Kashmir. In this paper, the researchers examine the types, causes, and coping mechanisms of stress experienced by Kashmiri students during COVID-19. The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted people's mental health all around the world, especially in Kashmir, due to a number of causes, including isolation, financial difficulty, disturbance of daily routines, and concern about the future (Ali, Rogers & Heward-Belle, 2021). The pandemic has had a variety of negative effects on people's mental health in Kashmir. Students have been living in terror of contracting the illness or losing loved ones because of the high number of COVID-19 cases in the area (Lattoo, Haddad, Mistry, Wadoo, Islam, Jan & Alabdulla, 2021). This concern has led to enormous stress and worry among the people of Kashmir. Daily routines have also been disturbed by the pandemic, with many people being compelled to stay in due to lockdowns and social isolation measures. As a result, people have experienced emotions of loneliness, boredom, and isolation, all of which can fuel depression and anxiety. Additionally, the pandemic's economic effects have made it difficult for many Kashmiri families to make ends meet. Lost income, unstable employment, and business closures have increased stress and anxiety among people in the area. The worry and anxiety that Kashmiri students have been experiencing as a result of these circumstances, as well as the uncertainty about the future and the length of the pandemic, have also increased (Fiorillo & Gorwood, 2020). Overall, the COVID-19 epidemic has had a serious negative effect on the mental health of Kashmiri citizens, resulting in tension, worry, and sadness. During these trying times, it is crucial for individuals, communities, and governments to prioritize mental health and well-being and to seek assistance when necessary.

4.2. Nature and sources of stress

The nature and sources of stress for students in Kashmir during the pandemic are unique due to the political and social context of the region. Kashmir has been facing political unrest and conflict for decades, and the pandemic has added another layer of stress and anxiety for students in the region.

The uncertainty surrounding the future is a significant source of stress for students in Kashmir. Due to the ongoing conflict, students in Kashmir have faced multiple shutdowns, curfews, and restrictions on movement in the past. The pandemic has added to this uncertainty, with students unsure when they will be able to return to schools and universities.

Academic pressure is another significant source of stress for students in Kashmir during the pandemic. The shift to online learning has been a challenge for students in the region, particularly those living in rural areas with limited access to the Internet and technology. The fear of falling behind and not being able to achieve their academic goals can cause stress and anxiety (Balliu, 2021).

Social isolation is another significant source of stress for students in Kashmir during the pandemic. The region has faced prolonged lockdowns and students have been unable to attend school, meet friends, or participate in social activities (Sinha & Manna, 2020). The lack of social interaction and isolation can have negative impacts on mental health, particularly for students who have faced prolonged periods of conflict.

Health concerns are also a source of stress for students in Kashmir during the pandemic. The region has limited healthcare infrastructure, and the fear of contracting the virus or not receiving adequate healthcare in case of infection can cause stress and anxiety.

4.3. Coping strategies adopted by students

Despite the unique challenges faced by students in Kashmir during the pandemic, many have adopted coping strategies to manage stress and anxiety. The following are some of the coping strategies adopted by students in Kashmir during the pandemic:

- **Adapting to online learning:** Many students have adapted to online learning by attending virtual classes, submitting assignments online, and engaging with teachers and peers through digital platforms. This has allowed students to continue their education and reduce the stress of falling behind.
- **Maintaining social connections:** Students in Kashmir have maintained social connections through social media, phone calls, and other virtual platforms. This has helped reduce the feeling of isolation and promote well-being.
- **Practicing self-care:** Engaging in activities such as exercise, meditation, and hobbies can help reduce stress and promote well-being. Students can also practice good sleep hygiene and ensure they are eating a healthy and balanced diet (Latoo et al., 2021).
- **Seeking support:** Students in Kashmir can seek support from mental health professionals, peers, and family members if they are struggling. Many NGOs in the region provide mental health services to students, and there are also many online resources available.
- **Focusing on what they can control:** Students in Kashmir can reduce stress by focusing on things they can control, such as their own actions and behaviors, rather than worrying about things outside of their control. They can also practice mindfulness and focus on the present moment rather than worrying about the future (Mumtaz, Manzoor, Jiang & Anisur Rahaman, 2021).

The COVID-19 pandemic has added another layer of stress and anxiety for students in Kashmir due to the ongoing conflict and political unrest in the region. The uncertainty surrounding the future, academic pressure, social isolation, and health concerns are all sources of stress for students in Kashmir during the pandemic. However, by adopting coping strategies such as adapting to online learning, maintaining social connections, practicing self-care, seeking support, and focusing on what they can control, students in Kashmir can manage their stress and anxiety during these challenging times (Hossain et al., 2020).

4.4. Valuable insights into the mental health of students during the COVID-19

Students' mental health has been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic all over the world, particularly in Kashmir, a place rife with war. Students in the area experience significant stress and anxiety due to the region's distinct political and social backdrop, so it is crucial to create effective interventions to promote their well-being. The information in this essay would be very helpful for understanding how Kashmiri kids' mental health was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and for helping to build the best solutions to help them.

During the pandemic, a number of variables, including academic pressure, social isolation, health worries, and the uncertainty of the future, had an impact on the mental health of students in Kashmir (AlKhanhal, 2019). For students in the area, especially those who live in rural places with limited access to technology, the move

to online learning has been a huge issue. Students now feel overburdened and apprehensive about their academic achievement and future chances as a result of this. Long-term lockdowns and travel limitations have caused social isolation, which has led to emotions of loneliness, anxiety, and melancholy. The prolonged conflict in the area has made it difficult for students to go to school, make friends, or engage in social activities, which has made the already common mental health problems worse. Students in Kashmir have experienced a great deal of stress due to health-related issues throughout the pandemic. Students have experienced stress and anxiety due to the region's inadequate healthcare infrastructure, the dread of catching the virus, and the worry that they may not receive proper medical care in the event of an infection. Appropriate interventions were created to support the health of Kashmiri students during the pandemic (Hussain et al., 2020). A few interventions that can be used are as follows:

- **Making mental health care available:** Students in the area should have access to mental health services to assist them to cope with the stress and anxiety brought on by the pandemic and continuous conflict.
- **Providing online resources:** Online resources such as mental health blogs, online counseling services, and self-help guides can help students in Kashmir manage their mental health during the pandemic.
- **Supporting online learning:** To reduce academic pressure, educational institutions in the region can provide support for online learning, such as technology access and academic support services.
- **Promoting social connections:** Educational institutions can facilitate social connections among students by creating virtual social activities, support groups, and mentorship programs.
- **Addressing health concerns:** To address health concerns, educational institutions can provide information and resources related to COVID-19 and access to healthcare services.

The mental health of students in Kashmir during the COVID-19 pandemic has been significantly affected by the unique political and social context of the region. The shift to online learning, social isolation, health concerns, and uncertainty surrounding the future has caused stress and anxiety for students (Wani, Jan & Ahmad, 2020). Appropriate interventions, such as providing access to mental health services, and online resources, supporting online learning, promoting social connections, and addressing health concerns, can be implemented to support the well-being of students in Kashmir during these challenging times.

4.5. Highlighting the need to prepare for future pandemics

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a wake-up call for the world, highlighting the need to prepare for future pandemics or similar global health crises. Here are some ways to fight against COVID-like situations in the future:

- **Strengthen healthcare infrastructure:** The pandemic exposed the weaknesses in healthcare systems worldwide, with shortages of medical supplies, equipment, and personnel. Governments must invest in strengthening healthcare infrastructure, including building new hospitals, training healthcare professionals, and increasing the production of medical supplies
- **Increase research and development:** Investing in research and development of vaccines, antiviral, and diagnostics can help in the rapid response to future outbreaks (Abdulghani, AlKanhal, Mahmoud, Ponnampuruma & Alfaris, 2011). Governments and private entities should collaborate to fund research and development of new therapies and vaccines.
- **Improve surveillance and response systems:** Early detection and response to outbreaks are critical in containing the spread of infectious diseases. Governments must invest in surveillance systems to detect outbreaks early, develop response plans, and establish protocols for coordination between healthcare agencies.

- **Increase public awareness:** The public must be educated about infectious diseases, including their transmission, prevention, and treatment. Governments and healthcare agencies must work together to increase public awareness through public health campaigns and education programs (Bhat et al., 2020).
- **Strengthen international cooperation:** The COVID-19 pandemic has shown the need for international cooperation to fight global health crises. Governments, international organizations, and private entities must work together to share information, resources, and expertise to prevent and control outbreaks.

The COVID-19 pandemic has taught us the importance of being prepared for future pandemics or similar global health crises. Strengthening healthcare infrastructure, increasing research and development, improving surveillance and response systems, increasing public awareness, and strengthening international cooperation are some ways to fight against COVID-like situations in the future. It is essential to take proactive measures now to prevent or mitigate the impact of future pandemics (Aslan & Pekince, 2021).

4.6. Mechanisms adopted by students to deal with the stress caused by the pandemic?

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the mental health of students, resulting in increased stress and anxiety levels. To deal with this stress, students have adopted various coping mechanisms. Here are some common coping mechanisms adopted by students during the pandemic:

- **Maintaining a routine:** Creating and sticking to a routine can help students regain a sense of control and structure in their daily lives, reducing stress and anxiety.
- **Staying connected with friends and family:** Having social support is essential for stress management. Students might feel less alone and receive emotional support by staying in touch with friends and family via social media, video chats, and phone conversations.
- **Engaging in physical activity:** Exercise has been shown to reduce stress and improve mood. Students can engage in physical activities such as yoga, running, or home workouts to manage their stress levels (Bhat et al., 2020).
- **Practicing mindfulness and meditation:** Mindfulness practices such as meditation, deep breathing, and visualization can help students manage their stress levels by promoting relaxation and reducing negative thoughts and emotions.
- **Limiting exposure to news and social media:** The constant bombardment of news and information about the pandemic can increase stress levels. Students can limit their exposure to news and social media to reduce their stress levels.
- **Seeking professional help:** In some cases, students may require professional help to manage their stress levels. Online counseling and therapy services are available for students who need support (Gao, Zheng, Jia, Chen, Mao, Chen & Dai, 2020).

Students' stress and anxiety levels have escalated as a result of the COVID-19 epidemic, necessitating the deployment of a variety of coping strategies. Some of the coping strategies used by students to manage the stress brought on by the pandemic include keeping a routine, staying in touch with friends and family, exercising, practicing mindfulness and meditation, limiting their exposure to news and social media, and getting professional assistance (Kousar, 2020). During these trying times, it is crucial to prioritize your mental health and get help when you need it.

5. Implications of the study

The findings of this study on the impact of COVID-19-related stress on the mental health of Kashmiri students have significant implications for mental health professionals, educators, and policymakers. It highlights the urgent need for interventions and support systems to address the psychological distress caused by the pandemic

and its aftermath. The results suggest that measures such as counseling services, mental health awareness campaigns, and educational support can help alleviate the negative effects of COVID-19 stress on the mental health of Kashmiri students. Failure to address the mental health consequences of the pandemic may have long-term implications for the well-being and productivity of this vulnerable population.

6. Suggestions

Assessing the effects of COVID-19 stress on mental health among Kashmiri students is an important task as the pandemic has resulted in significant changes in the lives of students, such as disruptions in academic and social life, financial instability, and uncertainty about the future. Here are some recommendations and suggestions for assessing the effects of COVID-19 stress on mental health among Kashmiri students:

- Mental health support services should be made easily accessible and available to all students: Students should have easy access to mental health support services such as counseling and therapy. Educational institutions should make sure that these services are available on-campus or online, and that students are aware of how to access them.
- Mental health awareness campaigns should be organized to reduce the stigma associated with seeking help: Mental health awareness campaigns can help to reduce the stigma associated with seeking help for mental health issues. Educational institutions, mental health professionals, and policymakers should work together to raise awareness about mental health, promote healthy coping strategies, and encourage students to seek help when they need it.
- Educational institutions should incorporate mental health education and coping strategies into their curriculum: Educational institutions should incorporate mental health education and coping strategies into their curriculum to help students develop the skills and knowledge necessary to manage stress and maintain good mental health. This can include teaching students about mindfulness, stress management techniques, and healthy coping strategies.
- Policymakers should prioritize the allocation of resources towards mental health services and programs, especially for vulnerable populations such as students: Policymakers should allocate resources towards mental health services and programs to ensure that all students have access to the care they need. This includes providing funding for mental health services, supporting research into effective interventions, and promoting policies that prioritize mental health.
- Future research should focus on evaluating the effectiveness of interventions in improving the mental health outcomes of Kashmiri students: Finally, future research should focus on evaluating the effectiveness of interventions in improving the mental health outcomes of Kashmiri students. This can include evaluating the effectiveness of mental health support services, educational programs, and policies aimed at improving mental health outcomes.
- The suggestions put forward in the text are practical and evidence-based. By implementing these suggestions, policymakers and educational institutions can work towards improving the mental health outcomes of Kashmiri students during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

11. Conclusion

In conclusion, it is undeniable that the Covid-19 pandemic has had a negative impact on Kashmiri kids' mental health. The study brought attention to the detrimental consequences of stress on students' mental health, including anxiety, depression, and sleep disruptions. The worry of getting the virus, difficulties with online learning, and the unpredictability of the future were among the issues causing stress during the pandemic. According to the report, it's critical to offer students enough mental health care during these tough times. The

government and educational institutions should work together to ensure that students have access to mental health services, such as therapy and counseling, to help them deal with their stress and worry. Therefore, it is crucial to put preventive measures in place including teaching pupils stress management strategies, promoting physical activity, and creating a strong social network. The report underlines the demand for a comprehensive strategy to address the issues with mental health that students encountered throughout the epidemic. In order to support students' mental health during these unheard-of times, cooperation between the government, educational institutions, mental health specialists, and community members is crucial. In light of the pandemic's effects on mental health, it is critical to focus on students' well-being in the post-Covid age.

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