

Understanding Anxiety and Depression in Today's Student Life

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Abstract

This paper explores the prevalence, causes, and effects of anxiety and depression among students in contemporary society. It aims to highlight the unique challenges faced by this demographic, identify the role of societal pressures, academic expectations, and technological influences, and discuss potential interventions for support and intervention.

Keywords: Anxiety, Depression, Student Life, Societal Pressures

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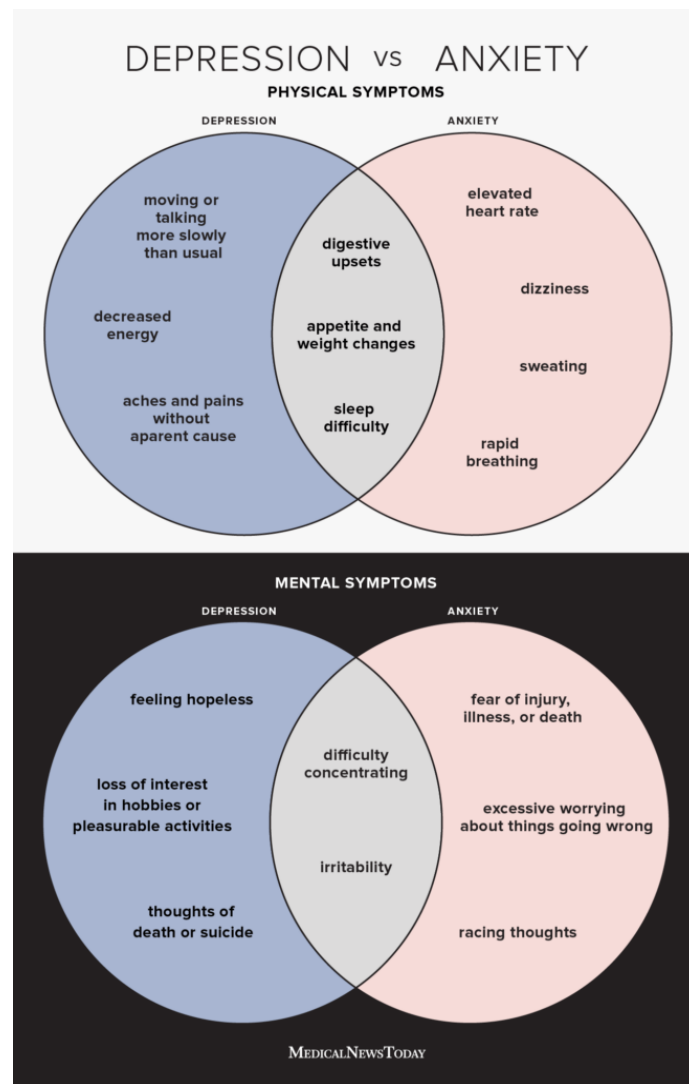
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1. Introduction

The mental health of students has become a pressing concern in today's society. Research indicates that anxiety and depression are increasingly common among students, leading to detrimental effects not only on their academic performance but also on their overall well-being. This paper examines the factors contributing to mental health issues among students and emphasizes the importance of addressing these challenges through effective strategies.

2. Prevalence of Anxiety and Depression Among Students

Recent studies reveal that a significant percentage of students experience symptoms of anxiety and depression. According to the American College Health Association, over 60% of college students report feeling overwhelming anxiety, and nearly 40% report experiencing depression. The transition from high school to college, coupled with increased responsibilities, contributes to heightened stress levels.



(Source of image Medical News Today)

3. Factors Contributing to Mental Health Issues:

Social media, academic pressure, and life transitions significantly contribute to stress, anxiety, and depression in students' lives.

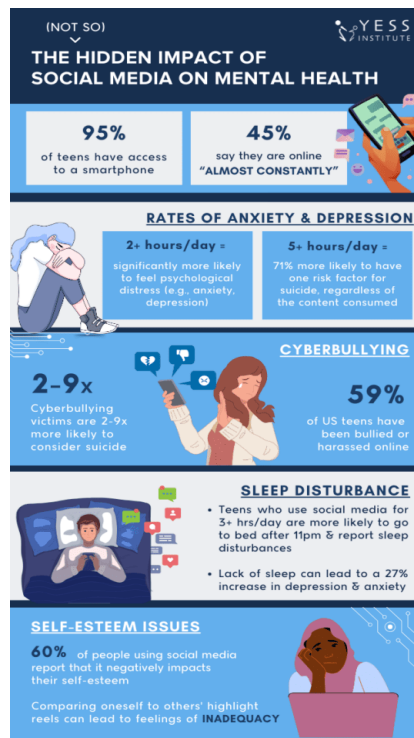
3.1 Academic Pressure

The rigorous academic environment and pressure to achieve can lead to stress. The competitive nature of education, coupled with the burden of financial concerns, can exacerbate feelings of inadequacy and hopelessness among students. Students today face a highly competitive educational environment, marked by rigorous coursework, examinations, and the pressure to achieve high grades. This pressure can lead to chronic stress and burnout, as students often sacrifice sleep and leisure to meet academic demands. The fear of failure and the expectation to succeed can exacerbate feelings of inadequacy and anxiety, sometimes resulting in depression when students struggle to meet these expectations.

3.2 Social Media and Technology

Social media has transformed the way students interact, but it also contributes to feelings of isolation and inadequacy. Comparisons with peers often lead to anxiety and depressive symptoms. Additionally, the constant connectivity can hinder students' ability to disconnect and recharge. The digital age has ushered in a complex landscape where social media plays a dual role. On one hand, it serves as a platform for communication and support; on the other, it is a source of significant stress. Students often experience anxiety due to comparison,

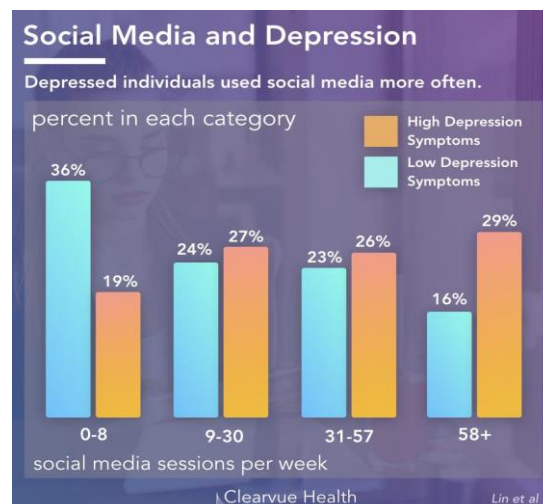
cyberbullying, and the pressure to maintain a perfect online persona. The constant connectivity can lead to decreased self-esteem and an overwhelming fear of missing out (FOMO), contributing to mental health issues.



(Source of image YESS Institute)

The 2019 study by Twenge, J. M., and colleagues shed light on a critical issue that affects many young adults today: the connection between social media use and mental health, particularly concerning anxiety, depression, and stress levels among students. Given that social media has become an essential element of daily life for many, with platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter serving as vital tools for communication and maintaining relationships, it's crucial to explore the effects this pervasive technology has on emotional well-being.

Researchers found that there is a concerning correlation between the excessive use of social media and an increase in mental health issues, notably anxiety and depression. One significant factor contributing to this is the "comparison trap," where individuals frequently find themselves comparing their lives to the seemingly perfect lives of others showcased online. This can lead to debilitating feelings of inadequacy and fear of missing out (FOMO), particularly among students who are often in a developmental stage where peer acceptance is paramount.



(Source of image Clearvue Health)

The impact of social media on students' mental health can be profound. The study pointed out that individuals who felt compelled to constantly check their accounts—an inclination that can lead to social media addiction—tended to experience disrupted sleep patterns. Sleep is a critical component of mental health; when students sacrifice their rest to scroll through feeds or respond to messages late into the night, their overall mood and stress levels significantly decline. This perpetual cycle of addiction can ultimately hinder a student's academic performance as well, due to decreased focus and productivity.

Considering these findings, it is vital for students to approach social media mindfully. Strategies to regulate social media use can include setting specific time limits for usage, opting for digital detoxes or breaks, and prioritizing face-to-face interactions over virtual ones. Engaging in hobbies, physical activities, and relaxing exercises can also serve as productive alternatives that contribute positively to mental health.

In summary, the research by Twenge and colleagues offers invaluable insights into how social media can deeply affect the mental health of young adults. By recognizing the signs of distress and the potential downsides of excessive online engagement, students can adopt healthier digital habits. This proactive approach not only helps mitigate anxiety, depression, and stress but also promotes a stronger, more resilient mental state in our increasingly connected world. Ultimately, the message is clear: while social media has its benefits, being aware of its influence on mental health is essential for fostering a balanced and fulfilling life.

3.3 Life Transitions

Changes such as leaving home, forming new relationships, and managing independence can significantly impact students' mental health. The struggle to balance these changes often leads to overwhelming feelings. Life transitions, such as moving from high school to college, adjusting to new social environments, or entering the workforce, further add to the stress experienced by students. These transitions often involve significant lifestyle changes, new responsibilities, and shifts in identity. The challenge of adapting to these changes can create feelings of isolation and uncertainty. Furthermore, the loss of a familiar support system and the pressure to establish new social connections can lead to increased anxiety.

Overview of L. Kearns Approach:

Regarding the insights provided by Kearns, L. on stressors among college students, this research highlights key factors contributing to anxiety and depression. Kearns identifies academic demands, financial pressures, and challenges in personal relationships as primary stressors. The study underscores that the high expectations imposed by both the educational system and the students themselves often lead to heightened anxiety. Financial stress, often stemming from tuition fees and student loans, adds another layer of mental burden. Additionally, navigating interpersonal relationships, whether with peers, family, or faculty, can contribute to feelings of anxiety and depression when conflicts or misunderstandings arise. The research emphasizes that these stressors often interplay, compounding their effects on students' mental health. This understanding points to the importance of holistic support systems, including mental health resources, financial counseling, and academic advising, to help students manage these challenges more effectively. Overall, creating an environment that acknowledges and addresses these stressors is essential for reducing their impact on students' mental well-being.

General statics of factors Contributing to Mental Health Issues in Students:

Academic Stress:

Studies have shown that around 70% of students report feeling stressed about academics (Tullahoma, 2021).

Social Media Influence:

A survey indicated that 60% of teens felt social media influences their self-image and can lead to feelings of inadequacy or depression.

Bullying:

About 20% of students experience bullying, which is linked with increased risk of depression and anxiety.

Family Issues:

Research suggests that approximately 25-30% of students with mental health issues report family problems, including divorce or parental mental illness.

General survey-

A survey by the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) that asked college students about their experiences with mental health in school. The survey found that more than 62% of respondents were no longer attending school for a mental health-related reason.

A survey that collected data from 373 campuses nationwide during the 2020–2021 school year. The study found that more than 60% of college students met the criteria for at least one mental health problem.

A survey by the American College Health Association found that almost three-quarters of students reported moderate or severe psychological distress.

A study published in the American Psychiatric Association journal found that the percentage of college students with a mental health diagnosis increased from 22% in 2007 to 36% in 2017.

Suicide Statistics:**Prevalence Among Students:**

According to the National College Health Assessment, about 15% of college students reported having seriously considered suicide in the past year.

Completion Rates:

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) indicates that suicide is the second leading cause of death among individuals aged 15 to 24.

Causes Related to Mental Health:

Approximately 90% of individuals who die by suicide have a mental health condition, with depression and anxiety being the most common.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs):

Studies show that students with multiple ACEs are significantly more likely to report suicidal ideation and attempts.

Causes of Mental Health and Associated Suicide Risks:

Depression: Major contributing factor, with around 60% of students reporting depressive symptoms.

Anxiety Disorders: Nearly 30% of students experience anxiety that can contribute to suicidal thoughts.

Substance Abuse: About 20% of students with mental health issues also report substance abuse, which increases suicide risk.

Trauma: Students exposed to trauma (including bullying and family issues) show significantly higher rates of mental health problems and suicidal behavior.

4. Effects of Anxiety and Depression on Students

4.1 Academic Performance

Mental health issues can severely affect a student's academic performance. Students experiencing anxiety or depression may find it difficult to focus, participate in class, or meet deadlines, leading to a decline in grades.

4.2 Physical Health

There is a strong link between mental health and physical health. Students suffering from anxiety and depression may also experience physical symptoms, such as fatigue, headaches, or gastrointestinal issues, further compromising their overall health.

4.3 Social Relationships

Mental health struggles can impair a student's ability to connect with peers. Social withdrawal is common, which can lead to increased feelings of loneliness and isolation.

5. Support and Intervention Strategies

5.1 Mental Health Services on Campus

Universities and colleges should ensure that mental health services are accessible. This can include counseling, workshops, and peer support programs designed to help students manage their mental health.

5.2 Promoting a Supportive Environment

Creating a culture where students feel comfortable discussing their mental health can reduce stigma and encourage help-seeking behavior. Initiatives may include awareness campaigns, training staff to recognize signs of distress, and fostering open dialogue about mental health.

5.3 Mindfulness and Stress-Reduction Techniques

Encouraging students to engage in mindfulness practices, meditation, and physical exercise can help reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression. Schools can offer programs that integrate these techniques into students' routines.

6. Conclusion

Anxiety and depression among students are significant issues that require urgent attention. By understanding the underlying factors and implementing supportive measures, educational institutions can foster a healthier environment for their students. Addressing mental health in student life is essential for enhancing academic success and ensuring long-term well-being.

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