Research Paper

Perceived Stress and Quality of Life among College Students

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ABSTRACT

Stress is a very important factor that plays a major role in the lives of college students. This research aims to study the relationship between perceived stress and quality of life among college students. Simple random sampling technique was used to draw in the sample from the population. 103 college students participated in this study. The tools used for the study were Perceived Stress Scale by Cohen, S., & Janicki-Deverts, D and Quality of life scale by WHO- (WHOQOL- Bref). Karl Pearson's correlation method was used for data analysis. The findings of the study indicated that there is a significant relationship between perceived stress and the four domains of Quality of life among college students.

Keywords: *College Students, Perceived Stress, Quality of Life*

College students is a population that is widely affected by the factor called stress. It can be a state of inadequacy between our needs and our capability and offers of our environments and demands from us. (L, 1996) Stress can greatly impact students ability to perform various activities and their general well-being. It is a term often used by individuals in a variety of social, academic, and employment settings and both negative and positive aspects of a person's life can contribute to stress, and stress does not necessarily result in negative outcomes. (Marshall et al., 2008). University students, however, often experience an undue amount of stress, which can have negative academic, emotional, or health outcomes. (Marshall et al., 2008). College students commonly experience stress because of increased responsibilities, a lack of good time management, changes in eating and sleeping habits, and not taking enough breaks for self-care. (*College Stress*, n.d.)

Moving to a college setting could cause drastic changes in a student's life which may adversely affect their well-being or quality of life. University students often report substantial levels of perceived stress, especially during particularly challenging periods, such as the transition from school to university, which requires them to adapt to different forms of learning or develop a new identity as a university student. (*APA PsycNet*, n.d.).

Perceived stress incorporates feelings about the uncontrollability and unpredictability of one's life, how often one has to deal with irritating hassles, how much change is occurring in one's life, and confidence in one's ability to deal with problems or difficulties. (*(PDF) Perceived Stress*, n.d.). Students frequently get caught up in situations where they find themselves overwhelmed and burned out in a world of never-ending competitions, which

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can negatively affect their well being. To show this many studies highlighted mental health issues in young adults, especially during their studying years at university. (Saleh et al., 2017)

The concept of quality of life (QoL) is widely used in a highly diverse range of disciplines and contexts. (Almarabheh et al., 2021). The evaluation of Quality of life (Qol), as part of mental health, is nowadays considered as fundamental in all medical specialties. (Katschnig H, 1997). Quality of life is a comprehensive indicator for assessing the health and well-being of individuals. The QoL of university students can be affected by a variety of factors. (Li & Zhong, 2022). According to the World Health Organization (WHO), QoL is defined as "Individuals' perceptions of their position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards, and concerns. (Abuse, 1997).

There are a number of studies conducted on the quality of life and perceived stress among various populations. In a study that aimed to evaluate the quality of life (QoL) and determine its association with various factors and social support among university students during the COVID-19 pandemic after the end of movement lockdown, It was found that some of the factors associated with lower quality of life were, frustration due to study disruption, severe depression and "stress" symptoms. In a study titled perceived stress and quality of life among doctor of pharmacy students, it was found that PharmD students showed higher levels of stress and lower levels of mental HRQOL. The study mentioned some of the common stress- triggers that were reported by the students and these were, family relationships, assignments and finance. (Marshall et al., 2008). In another study that was conducted on Pharmacy students in the University of Ghana, it was reported that there are significant correlations between stress and various domains of quality of life of undergraduate pharmacy students. (Opoku-Acheampong et al., 2017). The study suggested the encouragement of using more positive stress management strategies in the university.

In a systematic literature review on stress and quality of life among students it was shown that quality of life was frequently negatively associated with stress and factors such as insomnia and burnout were also associated with its deterioration. (Ribeiro et al., 2018). In this study, only 13 of the 142 papers in the scientific literature that were found met the previously specified eligibility requirements, demonstrating the dearth of studies that address the topic under evaluation. Another study aimed to identify the predictors of perceived stress and quality of life among graduate dental faculty. A representative sample of 348 dental professors from Brazilian master's and doctorate programs participated in this cross-sectional survey. The results of the study concluded that Women obtained higher PSS scores and lower QoL scores ($P < 0.05$). There was a negative correlation between perceived stress and all 4 QoL domains. (Meira et al., 2020). A study by Marcus Gbatongoh Sesay, titled, Perceived Stress in College Students: Prevalence, Sources, and Stress Reduction Activities showed that academic and financial obligations are the largest stressors for college freshmen and senior students. Yoga, reading, training, smoking, and drinking are various coping mechanisms used by the sample in this study to handle stress. (Sesay, 2019).

In a study that aimed to evaluate the relationship between perceived stress and quality of life among adults living in Delhi during the second wave of the pandemic, it was found that the overall quality of life had a significant negative correlation with perceived stress. (Kumar et al., 2022). Another study aimed to examine the health-related quality of life and perceived stress among masters of pharmacy and non-pharmacy masters students. The results showed

that Negative correlations were found between stress and mental and physical HRQOL in MPharm students. However, only negative correlation between stress and mental HRQOL in Non-MPharm students. (Awadh et al., 2013). In a cross-country comparative study on stress and quality of life in nursing students where data was collected from 547 nursing students from three countries, the findings showed that student's perceptions of stress and QoL were different across the three countries and higher stress perceptions were identified from taking care of patients, the clinical environment, and faculty, peer, and staff encounters, which predicted a negative QoL.(Labrague et al., 2017)

Contradicting to the studies mentioned above, a study which aimed to investigate the perceived stress and quality of life among Pharm. D students at Ibn Sina National College (ISNC) concluded that although stress has a major role in a student's life, none of the results had a negative effect on the student's quality of life. ("Investigation of Perceived Stress and Quality of Life Assessment of Pharm. D. Students at Ibn Sina National College in Saudi Arabia during 2016," 2018)

Aim
The aim of this research is to study the relationship between perceived stress and quality of life among college students.

Objectives
To find out the correlation between the perceived stress and quality of life among college students.

Hypothesis
H1: There is a relationship between perceived stress and quality of life in college students.

METHOD
Variables
- Independent variable: Perceived Stress
- Dependent variable: Quality of life

Area of Study
College students from the states of Kerala and Karnataka.

Sample Size
For this study, 103 college students in total were considered.

Need for the study
Students experience a tremendous amount of stress, which can lower their quality of life. This perceived stress may affect both physiological and psychological health negatively and lead to decline in the quality of life (QoL) of university students. (Seo et al., 2018). Various studies have been conducted to understand the correlation between these two variables. However, very few have been done on an Indian population.

Sampling Techniques
The probability sampling approach was used in this study to draw samples through simple random sampling from the states of Kerala and Karnataka. This method was used to select the sample without any kind of bias.

Instruments
- Google form questionnaire
- Perceived stress scale by Cohen, S., & Janicki-Deverts, D.
- Quality of life scale by WHO- WHOQOL- Bref

Perceived Stress Scale by Cohen, S., & Janicki-Deverts, D.
The PSS is a 10-item questionnaire to measure the self-reported level of stress in the respondents by assessing feelings and thoughts during the last month. Each item is scored from 0 (never) to 5 (very often) with a range of 0 to 40 for the total score of the scale. The psychometric properties of the PSS-10 were originally evaluated in a large national sample of 2,387 American adults (Baik et al., 2019). The scores on the PSS-10 demonstrated adequate internal consistency reliability ($\alpha = .78$); moderate concurrent criterion validity with the amount of stress experienced during an average week ($r = .39$, $p < .001$) and the frequency of stressful life events within the past year ($r = .32$, $p < .001$); and adequate convergent validity as evidenced by expected negative associations with perceived health status ($r = -.22$, $p < .001$) and positive associations with psychosomatic symptoms ($rs = .28$ to .34, $p < .001$) and health service utilization ($r = .22$, $p < .001$).(Shirlynn Spacapan & Oskamp, 1988)

WHOQOL- Bref
The WHO Quality of life scale- Bref is a subset of 26 items from the WHOQOL- 100. It produces a profile with four domains and two individually scored items about an individual's overall perception of quality of life and health. In this scale the quality of life of an individual is measured under four different domains and they are the following: Physical health, psychological, social relationship and environment. The reliability of the WHOQOL-BREF was assessed by standardized Cronbach's alpha coefficient, and the validity was measured by convergent validity, principal component analysis and con rmatory factor analysis.(Almarabheh et al., 2021). The WHOQOL-BREF had good internal consistency as Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the overall scale was 0.91.(Almarabheh et al., 2021).

Research Design
A correlational research design is used to carry out this research as it enables the researcher to investigate the relationship between the two variables.

Limitation of the study
The samples collected for this study were limited to only two states of India.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION
Descriptive statistics and Correlation for study variables.

Variable	n	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
Physical health	103	23.50	4.759	-	.735**	.598**	.642**	-.369**
Psychological	103	18.88	4.743	.753**	-	.672**	.741**	-.596**
Social relationship	103	10.08	2.468	.598**	.672**	-	.569**	-.336**
Environment	103	27.23	5.522	.642**	.741**	.569**	-	-.371**
Perceived stress	103	24.38	4.929	-.369**	-.569**	-.336**	-.371**	-

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

An analysis of the above table indicates whether there was a significant relationship between perceived stress and quality of life among college students. The scores were subjected to Pearson's correlation. After analysis it was found that there is a significant relationship between Perceived stress and the four domains under quality of life among college students. The number of responses obtained were 103. The mean value for perceived stress is 24.38 and the mean values for the four domains under quality of life are as follows, physical health - 23.50, Psychological - 18.88, social relationship - 10.08 and environment - 27.23. Here, it is found that there is a significant negative correlation between perceived stress and the domains of quality of life as the p value is less than the significant value at 0.01 level. Therefore, the hypothesis of this study is accepted. This can be supported by a study which indicated that there was a negative correlation between perceived stress and all 4 QoL domains among dental faculty. (Meira et al., 2020). Another study that was conducted on Pharmacy students in the University of Ghana, it was reported that there are significant correlations between stress and various domains of quality of life of undergraduate pharmacy students. (Opoku-Acheampong et al., 2017). Another study titled Quality of life and stress among health professions students concluded that scores in all four QOL domains were negatively correlated with PSS, indicating that better QOL is strongly and highly significantly related to lower perceived stress levels. (Alkatheri et al., 2019).

CONCLUSION

This research highlights the relationship between perceived stress and quality of life among college students. The study reported a negative correlation between the variables. Therefore, further investigation is required to understand the strategies that are needed in order to better the quality of life among college students.

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Conflict of Interest
The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.