

Research Article

PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH STATUS AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN BAGHDAD

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Abstract

Background and Objectives: We place a high value on health. Many factors influence health, including nutrition, physical exercise, stress level, personality, and conduct. Students may experience stress as a result of family and job expectations, which can have an impact on their social, emotional, and physical health. This survey evaluates university students' physical and emotional wellbeing.

Material and Methods: A descriptive cross-sectional design was taken on 401 university students in Baghdad. Data were collected by using questionnaire format to determine psychological and physical health of university students from 21st November (2022) to 20th May (2023).

Study results: The result of the study shows that 87.8% of students have physical psychological problems and needs treatment. And there is significant relationship between student's physical and psychological health and other variables.

Conclusion: The investigator observed that students have psychological and physical health levels are low and they need psychiatric treatment and there is significant relationship between student's physical and psychological health and other variables. *ASEAN Journal of Psychiatry, Vol. 24 (10) October, 2023; 1-5.*

Keywords: Healthy Lifestyle; Physical Health; Mental Health; College Student; Mental Illness

Introduction

According to research, the difficult living on campus, as well as a failure to adapt and adjust to university life, can have an impact on self-efficacy and sleep patterns [1]. Students may experience stress as a result of family and job expectations, which can have an impact on their social, emotional, and physical health [2,3]. Stress can be caused by a variety of circumstances; nevertheless, severe stress can affect an individual's lifestyle. There is a circular relationship between stress and sleep, especially when someone is stressed, whether due to financial concerns, health problems, or relationships, making it more difficult for the person to sleep [4].

Iraq is emerging from decades of war, which were followed by protracted periods of violence and insecurity. Despite great obstacles, the Iraqi national health system, which is largely represented by the Iraqi Ministry of Health (MOH), is operational and has made good progress in terms of service provision. The MOH made significant efforts to provide health services, including efforts to treat patients who could not be treated in Iraq outside of Iraq [5].

Iraqi people's mental health, already strained by years of war, has been exacerbated by the recent impact of COVID-19 and the country's current economic position. Before and after COVID-19, the causes of mental health problems differed.

People experienced psychological distress as a result of property destruction or loss, as well as family members being arrested, incarcerated, or forced abducted. These concerns, which included depression, domestic abuse, epilepsy, and psychosomatic ailments, resulted in long-term misery [6].

Anxiety and sadness are currently the most common mental health problems in our society. Anxiety levels increased from 45%-68% during this time period, while depression increased from 10%-20%. This is a dangerous sign because these mental health disorders frequently progress to more serious psychological distress [7].

The university time, which is recognized to be a dynamic transition period that works as a bridge between childhood and adulthood, is one of the most essential stages in adolescence. Young individuals increasingly gain responsibility for their own health during this period of physical, psychological, social, and sexual development [8].

Considering all the above, the following research questions were proposed: Are physical and mental health related to socio-demographic data of undergraduate students from Baghdad? What is the level of physical and mental health for students? In order to answer these research questions, this study aims to analyze the relationships between physical and mental health and socio-demographic data, and assessing the level of physical and mental health (low, medium, or high) in university students in Iraq, Baghdad.

Materials and Methods

Study design

A descriptive design was used to study in the period of 21st November (2022) to 1st May (2023).

Setting of the study

The study was conducted among university students in Baghdad city. Six universities in Baghdad are (Al-Bayan University, Al-Farahidi University, Mashreq University, Baghdad University, University of Technology, and American University of Baghdad).

Participants

A purposive (non-probability) sample consisting of 401 male and female university students

from six universities in Baghdad. The included participant are all students accept to fill the study instrument.

Variables of the study

The dependent variables are the physical and mental health status, while the independent variables are the socio-demographic characteristics.

Data analysis

Data are analyzed through the use of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version (23) application Statistical analysis system and excel application. The researcher uses multiple testes to analyze the data: frequency and percentage, mean and correlation.

Bias

A non-probability sample is selected based on non-random criteria. For instance, in a convenience sample, participants are selected based on accessibility and availability. Non-probability sampling often results in biased samples because some members of the population are more likely to be included than others.

Study instrument

To achieve the research objectives, a questionnaire was composed of two sections: Part I: Include general information about students such as Personal Information, (gender, the age, study type, the name of the college department or academic major, class of study, marital status, educational level), part II, represents the the mental health axis like the stress that students get when they have an exam, feeling nervous and getting heart racing, getting headaches and feeling panic, maybe they feel lonely and hopeless maybe even thinking about ending their life, sleep disturbance and poor appetite all of that are a mental health issue that we talk about in our research to help us understand the students and help them get a better mental health care [9].

Ethical compliance

This research funds by the researcher, while it considered as single independent research. The approval from the study sample themselves to collect the data. The name of the participants did not use in the questioner to save the privacy of them.

Results

Table 1 shows that the majority of the studied sample were female (64.3%), while they are from a private university (62.1%) and the greater number of them single (89%) of the study sample.

Table 1. Student’s demographic variables.

Variables	Characteristics	N	%
Gender	Male	143	35.7
	Female	258	64.3
	Total	401	100
	18-21	156	38.9
	22-27	241	60.1
Age	28-35	4	1
	Total	401	100
	Governmental	152	37.9
Type of university	Privet	249	62.1
	Total	401	100
	Single	358	89.3
	Married	40	10
	Divorced	1	0.2
Marital status	Widow	2	0.5
	Total	401	100
	First	57	14.2
	Second	63	15.7
	Third	169	42.1
Class for student	Fourth	111	27.7
	Fifth	1	0.2
	Total	401	100

Note: N=frequency; %=percentage.

Table 2 shows that the majority of sample has psychological problems need treatment.

Table 2. Physical and psychological health among students.

	Characteristics	N	%
Physical and Psychological problems	Probable psychiatric case	49	12.2
	Psychiatric case needs to treatment	352	87.8
	Total	401	100

Note: N=frequency; %=percentage; Mean of score (probable psychiatric case ≤ 1.55, psychiatric case needs to treatment ≥ 1.75).

Table 3 shows there are a significant relationship between Students Physical and Psychological Health and (Gender, Age, Type of study and marital status).

Table 3. Relationship between student’s healthy lifestyle behaviours and physical and psychological health.

Psychological and physical health		
Variables	Pearson correlation	Sig (2-tailed)
Gender	0.150**	0.003
Age	-0.134**	0.007
Type of University	-0.101*	0.044
Marital status	-0.102*	0.042
Class	-0.01	0.846

Note: **=Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); *=Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Discussion

The current study intended to determine the relationship between physical and mental health among Baghdad college students. According to the study’s findings, men students identified themselves as more physically active than female students. This discovery is similar to the findings of prior studies among university students, which revealed a similar pattern: Male students engage in more physical activity than female students [10].

The current study was conducted in Baghdad, Iraq, to look at the effect of cosmetics on self-perception. According to the current study findings, the majority of students are female and unmarried. The study sample ranged in age from 22 to 27 years. Widyasari and Turnip found the same thing after studying 366 female and 250 male students [11].

According to the present survey’s findings, more than half of students from prestigious universities study in the third and fourth grades. Jianjian et al., discovered that the average value of lower grades is 3.671, whereas the average value of upper grades is 3.611 [12]. Lower grade college students participate in physical exercise at a higher rate than higher grade college students (T=-2.224, P=0.026).

According to the current study’s findings, students’ physical and mental health is poor, and they require treatment. According to Rodrguez-Romo et al., there is a high prevalence of mental health disorders among students, as well as a high percentage of physical inactivity [13].

The association between physical activity and mental health varies depending on the intensity of physical activity and the domain in which it is performed. College students do not prioritize physical activity. The weekly average for physical activity is 1.64. The average number of college students who exercise is 2-3 times a week. The general level of passion for physical activity is low, and the number of activities each week is low. Negative emotions have a comparatively high proportion. The proportions of having unpleasant emotions “always”, “often”, and “occasionally” are all greater than the national average. If such students are subjected to negative emotions for an extended period of time without proper adjustment and assistance, their body and mind will suffer.

A considerable proportion of undergraduate students suffer from some form of mental disease, with females far outnumbering males. In addition, Qureshi et al., discovered that a substantial number of undergraduate students (42.6%) in a sample of Pakistani students exhibited mild depression [14]. Similarly, in research of undergraduate students from Turkey, Uner et al., discovered that 56.8% of students had a GHQ12 score of 4. According to the findings of this study, the most stressful situations were not being able to pursue the career or university of their choice, losing a family member, or breaking up with their partner [15].

The third table shows the relationship between physical and mental health status and socio-demographic characteristics. Physical and mental health have a significant relationship with (Age, $p=0.007$), (Gender, $p=0.003$), (Type of university, $p=0.044$), and (Marital status, $p=0.042$). In the largest cross-sectional sample to date, individuals who exercised had about 15 (about 43%) fewer days of poor mental health in the previous month than individuals who did not exercise, but were otherwise similar in terms of age, race, gender, marital status, income, employment status, education level, BMI category, self-reported physical health, and previous diagnosis of depression [16].

Conclusion

Finally, college students have good physical and mental health, with a strong sense of physical health and physical exercise, less psychological anguish, and a strong ability to withstand pressure and mental adjustment. In terms of physical health, college students are in good shape and

place a high value on physical activity. In terms of mental health, college students experience fewer unpleasant feelings, have a greater ability to resist pressure, and can moderately modify their mood. However, we should increase college students' physical and mental health education, pay attention to different groups of college students' physical and mental health education, and expand college students' physical and mental health education methods.

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