

Review Article

Health Consequences of Interpersonal Challenges

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A B S T R A C T

Introduction: College students face a myriad of social challenges that significantly impact their mental and physical health. This comprehensive review explores the intricate relationship between social dynamics and health outcomes among college students. Key social challenges, including difficulties in making friends, roommate conflicts, and social pressures, are examined for their effects on mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and stress. The review highlights how these mental health challenges can lead to physical health problems, including sleep disorders, substance abuse, and eating disorders. Additionally, the impact of social stressors on academic performance and cognitive function is discussed.

Methodology: This review article employs a comprehensive literature review methodology synthesizing findings from online sources published between 2019 and 2023. Key areas of focus include the prevalence of social challenges, their psychological and physiological impacts, and effective interventions.

Result: The results highlight the impact of social challenges in sowing the seeds of social anxiety leading to stress, depression along with other health problems and how important it is to address social issues in order to enhance students' general wellbeing. In order to mitigate these issues, effective interventions like peer support programs, mental health services, and faculty involvement are essential.

Conclusion: The review concludes with recommendations for enhancing campus health programs and policies to better support students. Future research directions are suggested to further understand the complex interplay between social dynamics and health in the college setting.

Keywords: Social Anxiety, Mental Health, Cognitive Function, Social Pressure, Stress, Depression, Eating Disorder, Sleeping Disorder, Substance Abuse

Introduction

A multitude of social circumstances impact the well-being of college students, making it a complex issue. A student's mental and physical health are greatly influenced by the social connections and interactions they have while navigating the challenges of academic life. Social interaction and association include social obstacles such as roommate conflicts, social pressure, and difficulty making friends. These issues can have a significant impact on mental and physical health, leading to stress, depression, anxiety and most crucially social anxiety. SAD is one of the most prevalent mental health conditions. Fear of being judged and avoiding social interactions are hallmarks of SAD, which can impair social functioning¹. It is characterized by a strong and enduring fear of social rejection or humiliation, and it is frequently associated with feelings of loneliness and social isolation². Up to one in eight people will experience social anxiety disorder (SAD) at some point in their lives³. Chronic worries about being judged and rejected by others lead to unhealthy coping mechanisms, which can exacerbate stressful situations in life.⁴

In a community sample of teenagers, anticipated levels of social anxiety are linked to negative social cognitions, safety behaviors, self-focused attention, and pre- and post-event processing. Four of these five process variables were revealed to be prospectively linked to social anxiety⁵. There is a strong correlation between social anxiety and other conditions.³ These include high blood pressure, decreased pain tolerance, elevated symptoms of stress and depression, weakened immune function, skin conditions like psoriasis and atypical dermatitis, delayed recovery from illness, substance and alcohol addiction, and cognitive impairments like judgment, memory retention, and decision-making⁶. One explanation for the factors influencing these outcomes is people's propensity to have overly pessimistic opinions about their social acceptability reducing the likelihood of rejection by restricting emotional outpouring and self-disclosure^{2,3,4,8}. All such conditions in certain situations can be further explained by traumatic experiences that the person has had, such as abuse as a child, social pressure, or growing up in an unstable environment with frequent family arguments or no parental support^{4,6}. All of these indicators of negative thinking independently predict higher levels of social anxiety⁵. The goal of this paper is to offer a comprehensive analysis of the ways in which social dynamics affect college students' wellbeing. We aim to comprehend the wider health implications that result from the interactions of peer relationships, institutional contexts, and social support. This thorough examination will emphasize how crucial it is to create supportive social environments in educational settings in order to advance students' general wellbeing. With this review, we hope to

clarify the important elements that affect students' health and provide information on possible treatments that could improve their time in college.

Methodology

This review article utilizes a comprehensive literature review methodology probing the impact of social challenges on the mental and physical health of college students. The study incorporates findings from online sources published between 2018 and 2024. Key areas of focus include the prevalence of social challenges, their psychological and physiological impacts, and effective interventions.

Literature Search Strategy

Data were collected through systematic searches in academic databases such as PubMed and Google Scholar. In all databases, the following search string was used (Social Anxiety, Cognition, Depression, Stress, Substance Abuse, Social pressure, Roommate relation, Social interaction, Peer based mentoring program, Mental health).

Inclusion Criteria

The studies that specifically addressed social challenges and health outcomes in college populations. Social dynamics and student well-being were examined in relation to each other and customary patterns emerged from the findings.

Exclusion Criteria

Studies were not included if they were not printed in journals that undergo peer review and those which moved away from the subject of the topic societal challenges and how they affect mental and physical health.

Result

Using a thorough examination of the literature, we looked at how social dynamics affect college students' well-being in this review. Our research reveals numerous important areas:

- **Social Support and peer relationships:** Students with robust support systems (from family, friends, faculty in educational institutions, etc.) report lower levels of stress and anxiety disorders. It has been discovered that anxiety and attachment type are closely related, with higher levels of social anxiety being linked to less secure attachment forms which impairs normal functioning of a person mentally as well as physically. The degree of anxiety that a person or student experiences as a result of growing up or living in a continually controlling or protective environment puts pressure on them to refrain from participating in social activities⁶. The correlation between social anxiety and behavioral discomfort implies that SA is linked to selective behavioral impairment and presents as discomfort and as a coping mechanism they tend to remain alone

in isolation increasing risk of stress, depression and suicidal thoughts³. Even when a bias toward greater initial reports is taken into consideration, college roommates describe a similar trajectory, saying that they believe their roommate relationship to be getting worse with time.⁹

- **Academic pressure and institutional environment:** According to studies, untreated emotional issues and ongoing mental stress can have detrimental effects including decreased focus. Higher levels of DAS hinder students' ability to participate academically due to the emotional and cognitive burdens associated with these psychological states, which all lead to self-doubt and negative evaluation. Students who are having difficulty in school may feel overburdened, discouraged, or believe their efforts are in vain¹⁰. Stress brought on by academic demands and the demanding atmosphere of educational institutions has emerged as a primary contributor to feelings of anxiety, depression, and stress, resulting in normal cognitive performance as well as comorbidities like overeating and poor sleep⁶. Sleep deprivation may also hinder learning.¹¹
- **Health behaviors:** Positive social interactions often correlate with healthier lifestyle choices. And those who are not Able to cope up with it undergo Some consequences affecting mental and physical health.
- **Depression and Isolation:** Due to their tendency to have overly pessimistic opinions about their social acceptability, socially anxious people may be more susceptible to feeling burdened and socially isolated. Depression and social anxiety are highly comorbid; over 20% of people with social anxiety disorder also have depression, and they report much more severe suicidal thoughts.²
- **Sleep:** Although the amount of hours of sleep has little bearing on anxiety, it is true that worrying and feeling anxious have an impact on sleep quality, which drastically reduces a person's responsiveness and contributes to all other mental health problems.⁶
- **Eating disorder:** Regarding eating behavior, it has been observed that health related anxiety correlates with dietary behavior and with a preoccupation with food and physical exercise influencing eating disorders⁶. However eating disorders have been more observable characteristic found in individuals with appearance anxiety rooting from self appearance and body perception⁸. This all explains about women suffering from generalized anxiety more than men.^{6,5,8}
- **Stress:** People with higher social anxiety placed greater blame on themselves for the occurrence of stressful events. Individuals with higher social anxiety reported fewer independent stressful events than those with lower social anxiety (after controlling

for depression). Social anxiety and depression have characteristics that may lead to stress generation, and the association between anxiety symptoms and stressful life events was mediated by depression symptoms. Neuroticism, a trait shared by social anxiety and depression, is partially responsible for the episodic stress generation in both conditions and is prospectively linked to dependent stress.⁴

- **Drugs and substance abuse:** Compared to cannabis users without a concomitant social anxiety condition, those with social anxiety were seven times more likely to suffer from significant cannabis-related impairment. Those who start using cannabis at age 17 or less are more likely to acquire cannabis dependence than those who start using it at age 21 or older. It was shown that social anxiety was strongly correlated with experiential avoidance, or the refusal to go through uncomfortable internal sensations, which was correlated with coping mechanisms.⁷

Discussion

The results imply that even more focused social cognitive skills training may be advantageous for studies investigating the effectiveness of social skills training in conjunction with cognitive behavioral therapy¹. The current research indicates that by identifying and treating social anxiety in teenagers early on, we may be able to lower suicide thoughts and behaviors. Given the low rates of treatment-seeking in SAD active screening programs, it could be necessary to identify young individuals with social anxiety symptoms in schools. Regarding therapies, it is encouraging to know that there are effective treatments for SAD. For instance, according to UK clinical guidelines (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, 2013), cognitive therapy for SAD is advised as a first-line treatment for adult SAD and has been linked to significant, controlled effect sizes in teenagers². Methods that assist the person in identifying the nervous behaviors they engage in (such as clearing their throat or fidgeting) and practicing their cessation in a secure setting may be very helpful. In order to improve the appearance of a relaxed posture and lessen muscle tightness, progressive muscle relaxation may also be helpful. When these methods are effective, they could lead to better results in circumstances where fewer symptoms of anxiety could be viewed as positive⁵. Reducing appearance concern may be a useful strategy for ED symptoms. Positive feelings like a greater respect for one's body could enhance intuitive eating and reduce the symptoms of ED. This is important because it helps young people develop a positive appearance that isn't dependent on comparison. If university students cultivate a body-positive view discourse of self-appearance, they may be able to restore their classmates' social confidence⁸. Over the course of treatment for many anxiety-related

conditions, including mindfulness-based therapies, which have also been demonstrated to be effective in treating SAD, cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), an effective treatment for anxiety disorders, seems to be linked to modest improvements in sleep. It has been demonstrated that sleep is crucial for promoting memory consolidation processes.¹¹ Some institutions have decided to innovate by putting in place peer-based counseling and/or support networks as a result of this. It might also imply that state-based psychopathological symptoms can be less frequently experienced through therapies involving a semi-trained person, like peer mentorship, than trait-based symptomatology.¹²

Conclusion

Behavioral discomfort (such as trembling or fidgeting) during speech and interaction activities is associated with social anxiety, although it is not linked to other aspects of performance (such as verbal fluency or the quality of verbal expression) 3. Social dynamics have played an important role either in shaping the personality- physically or mentally or resulting in a curse which affects all the parameters of individual's life and existence. Anxiety in any form is not conditioned or limited by anything, especially age, gender, religion or culture, and it is not isolated in time, as it does not disappear by itself and requires intentional, sustained and specific actions to change it. In order to better comprehend the intricate relationship between social dynamics and health in the college setting, further study paths are recommended.

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