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Quality of life and stress among college students from two different economic statuses

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Abstract

The objective was to compare and study the difference in quality of life and stress, between students belonging to two different economic statuses of lower Socio-economic status and higher Socio-economic status. The study was conducted on post graduate students aged between 21-23 years pursuing post-graduation course. A between group design with purposive sampling was considered for the study. Kuppaswamy Socio-economic Scale was used to identify students belonging to lower Socio-economic status and higher Socio-economic status. Thirty students each belonging to lower Socio-economic status and higher Socio-economic status were administered quality of life scale and stress scale. The responses were scored and results analyzed by computing Mean, Standard Deviation and 't' test to study the difference in level of quality of life and stress between students of lower Socio-economic status and higher Socio-economic status. The results indicated that there was a significant difference in quality of life and stress between Lower Socio Economic Status and High Socio Economic Status.

Keywords: Quality of life, stress, students, economic status

Introduction

The World Health Organization has defined quality of life as "an individual's perception of their position in life in the context of the culture and value system in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards, and concerns (WHO, 1995). It is a broad ranging concept affected in a complex way by the person's physical health, psychological state, level of independence, social relationships and their relationships to salient features of the environment" (WHO, 1993) [15].

The World Health Organisation (WHO, 1995) definition of Health has been amplified to include the ability to lead a "socially and economically productive life". The 1978 declaration and subsequent global conferences of WHO, have made very clear the following facts: Health and development mutually impact each other. Health contributes to and results from social and economic development. All sectors of the society affect and get affected by health. Investing in health is thus investing for development.

Mental health, health status and socioeconomic status are important determinants of an individual's wellbeing. There are thought to be important interactions between these dimensions of wellbeing, with causal links running in both directions. Poor health and poor mental health can reduce earnings ability, through their effects on education and employment, and poverty can lead to lower educational attainment and poorer physical health (Ardington, Case, 2010) [1].

Quality of life, health and economic conditions are interrelated. Economics can have its impact on quality of life of individuals in general which can have an impact on both physical and psychological health in specific (Jenkins, Baingana, Ahmad, McDaid, and Atun, 2011) [6]. Health is an indivisible part of public health and significantly affects social and economic capital. Mental or psychological well-being is part of an individual's capacity to lead a fulfilling life. That includes the ability to study, work or pursue leisure interests, and to make day-to-day personal or household decisions about educational, employment, housing or other choices. Disturbances to an individual's mental well-being compromise these capacities, sometimes in a fundamental and enduring manner (WHO, 2005) [17].

Stress is among the most prominent problems in health care. It could be impacted by various factors such as social, economic, individual and so on.

Researchers show that socio-economic factors and suicide and stress has significantly related (Elliott, 2016) ^[5]. The people in low social class may more engage with social problems than higher social class. They may confront to problems such as crime, violence, unemployment, financial hardship, population density, disorder personality, etc. (Buglass, 1976) ^[3]. However, these difficulties could be resulted from relationship of inequality socio-economic and mental or physical health.

In this background an attempt has been made to study the quality of life and stress among female students belonging to higher socio-economic status and lower socio-economic status and understand if economic condition can have impact on different domains of quality of life and stress.

Socioeconomic status is commonly conceptualized as the social standing or class of an individual or group. It is often measured as a combination of education, income and occupation (Snyder, Dillow, and Hoffman - National Center for Educational Statistics, 2009) ^[12]. Examinations of socioeconomic status often reveal inequities in access to resources, plus issues related to privilege, power and control. Socio Economic Status is a frequently used identifier and focus of study in psychological research (Matthews and Gallo, 2011) ^[10].

Methodology:

The aim of the present study was study the differences in quality of life and stress between students belonging to two different economic statuses of lower Socio-economic status and higher Socio-economic status. It was hypothesised that there will be a significant difference in quality of life and stress between students belonging to lower socio economic status and higher socio economic status. A between group exploratory research design was opted for the study. The sample consisted of post graduate students aged between 21-23 years pursuing their post-graduation course. Purposive sampling was opted for the study. Students undergoing counselling or psychotherapy were excluded from this study. Students belonging to lower and higher economic status as identified on Kuppuswamy socio economic status scale (Kuppuswamy, 2014) were administered WHO QOL BREF Instrument (1998) ^[13] and Stress Response Checklist (Varma, 1997) ^[14]. The assessment tool was scored and results analysed using appropriate statistical measures.

Tools

Kuppuswamy's Socio-Economic Status Scale Revised (Kuppuswamy, 2014)

The Kuppuswamy scale proposed in 1976, measures the Socio economic status of an individual based on three variables namely, education and occupation of the head of the household and income of the family of the three variables. Of the three variables, education and occupation of the head of the household do not change frequently with time. The scale consists of 21 Items which could be self-administered. The reliability of the scale on test-retest method was 0.93. The content validity was tested of proposed socio economic status scale by opinion of subject experts (Kusum Lata Gaur, 2013) ^[8]. In the present study Kuppuswamy scale was used to identify the students belonging to higher socio economic status and lower socio economic status.

WHO QOL BREF Instrument (1998) ^[13]

The WHOQOL-BREF is an abbreviated 26 item version of

the WHOQOL-BREF. The instrument comprises of four domains-physical health, psychological, social relationship and environment. The WHOQOL instruments place primary importance and the perceptions of the individual. WHO OoL-BREF has shown to display good discriminant validity, content validity, and test-retest reliability. Domain scores produced by the WHOQOL-BREF have been shown to correlate at around 0.9 with the WHOQol-100 domain scores.

Stress Response Checklist (Varma, 1997) ^[14]

The Stress response checklist consists of 41 items in the form of questionnaire. Each question has five point rating scale in terms of never, rarely, sometimes, rather often, and nearly all the time.

The questions are scored in terms of 1,2,3,4 & 5 respectively on five point scale, with maximum possible scoring being 205, and minimum possible score being 41. A score of 150 and above indicate high stress, a score of 101 to 149 indicate average stress and a score of 100 and below indicate low stress level. The scale has been used to assess the stress levels of college students, teachers, and other general population. The scale has adequate validity with test retest reliability of 0.72 to 0.78 according to studies.

Procedure

Male and female-higher Socio-economic and lower Socio-economic status students aged between 21-23 years pursuing their post-graduation degree course were administered the Quality Of Life Questionnaire (BREF, WHO) and Stress Response Checklist (Varma, 1997) ^[14]. The responses on the assessment tools were scored and results analysed. Statistical analysis was done by using 't' test to understand the difference in quality of life (physical health, psychological, social relationships and environment) and stress between students belonging to lower socio economic status and higher socio economic status.

Analysis of results

The responses were scored appropriately. The results were analyzed by computing Mean, standard deviation and 't' test. 't' test was used to study the difference in mean scores of quality of life and stress.

Results

Table 1: Showing the sample characteristics

	Lower socio economic status		Higher socio economic status	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Number	15	15	15	15
Total	30		30	
Age	21-23 Years			
Education	Post-graduation degree course			

Table 1 shows that total of 30 students from higher socio economic status and 30 students from lower socio economic status were considered for the study. 30 students each were considered from post-graduate degree course for higher socio economic status and lower socio economic status after administering Kuppuswamy's Socio-Economic Status Scale. Male students formed 50 percent of the sample, whereas females formed 50 percent of sample.

Table 2: Showing the mean, SD and 't' ratio on domains of physical, psychological, social relationship and environmental of WHO Quality of life for lower socioeconomic status and higher socio economic status:

Domains	Groups	Mean	Std. Deviation	t value
Physical health	LSES	13.30	2.99	6.23**
	HSES	18.27	3.17	
Psychological	LSES	13.03	3.42	2.73*
	HSES	15.40	3.30	
Social Relationship	LSES	9.93	2.05	9.76**
	HSES	5.50	1.41	
Environment	LSES	16.13	3.38	3.04*
	HSES	18.03	3.30	

P = * 0.05; P = **0.01 (Significant at 0.05 and 0.01 level)

The mean values and t ratio on the different domains indicates that the mean values for lower social economic status group for four different domains of physical, psychological, social relationship and environmental were 13.30, 13.03, 9.93 and 16.13 respectively. Likewise the mean values for higher social economic status group for four different domains of physical, psychological, social relationship and environmental were 18.27, 15.40, 5.50 and 18.03 respectively. The difference between the domains were all significant, two each significant at 0.01 level and 0.05 level. The results indicate that there is a significant difference between lower socio economic status and higher socio economic status group in all the domains of quality of life. The scores indicate that the mean values for lower socio economic status were less in all the areas except for social relationship. The results indicate that the lower socio economic status group had significantly better social quality of life than higher socio economic status group. But in all the other domains of physical, psychological and environmental the higher socio economic status group had significantly better quality of life than higher socio economic status group.

Table 3: Showing the mean, SD and t ratio on stress scale between lower socioeconomic status and higher socio economic status:

Area	Groups	Mean	Std. Deviation	t value
Level of Stress	LSES	25.83	8.59	14.17**
	HSES	64.53	12.23	

**P= 0.01 level (significant at 0.01 level)

As shown in table the mean value on stress for lower socio economic status group and higher socio economic status group are 25.83 and 64.43 respectively, the t vale is significant at 0.01 level. The results indicate that there is a significant difference between lower socio economic status and higher socio economic status group in level of stress. The scores indicate that the mean values for lower socio economic status is less when compared to higher socio economic status. The results indicate that the lower socio economic status group has significantly less stress than higher socio economic status group.

Discussion

The results point out to the fact that there is impact of economic status on quality of life. Higher economics impact positively on physical, psychological and environmental aspects but negatively on social relationship, showing that the quality of social relationships may deteriorate with higher economic status and improve on other domains of quality of life. Though this points out to the need to raise the economic status but loose on relationship value. This clearly

indicates that there is need for further research to understand the reason for decrease in relationship value among higher socio economic status background and need to provide the insight, awareness and sensitize over the through intervention programmes for individuals from higher socio economic status. The study indicates that higher socio economic status group is at risk for experiencing more stress and the reasons for the same have to be researched upon. May be belong to a status itself pose high expectations on the individuals which a person may not be able to achieve and hence also have high suicidal ideation. Overall though the reasons have to be worked on the present study do indicate that the higher socio economic status group is at risk for increased stress levels. The result of this study is contradictory to many studies which found that lower socio economic status group is more vulnerable to many psychological issues including the level of stress.

Some studies related to economic status have found higher socio-economic status to be associated with better health/well-being among adolescents (Marmot, 2005) [9]. Studies show that family socioeconomic status is strongly linked with several dimensions of mental health and differences across a wide range of demographic groups, varying by age, gender and different SES measures (Conger, Conger and Martin, 2010) [4].

Conclusions

The quality of life in all domains is excellent for the higher socio economic status than the lower socio economic status except in the domain of social relationship. There is need for further research to understand the reason for decrease in relationship value among higher socio economic status background. The results also indicated that the higher socio economic status group has significantly more level of stress when compared to lower socio economic status group. The result of the study is contradicting many studies which find lower socio economic status group being more vulnerable to many psychological issues including the level of stress. To analysis the reasons for the same more research work needs to be done in this area.

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