

Medical sciences students experience significantly higher psychological distress during training compared to students in other academic fields. This distress affects mental health, academic performance, and attitudes toward patients. The present study aimed to examine the relationship between mental health, academic achievement, and achievement motivation, and to identify associations with demographic factors. The mean age of participants was 21.69 years. Unmarried individuals outnumbered married ones by approximately 8 to 1, likely due to the low mean age. The sample was predominantly female, mostly consisting of paramedic students, and most reported a moderate financial situation. The fathers of most participants had not attended college. None of the scales showed a significant correlation with age, likely because of the narrow age range of the respondents.

The mean GHQ score was 51.59 out of 84, with a cutoff of 23.23, indicating poor overall mental health among participants. GHQ includes four subscales: somatic symptoms, anxiety and insomnia, depression, and social dysfunction. Somatic symptoms showed no association with demographic factors, which contrasts with prior studies suggesting that women experience more somatic symptoms. This difference may result from distinct measurement tools or sample size variations. Social dysfunction was significantly associated with financial and marital status, being more common among married students and those with financial difficulties. This may be due to the increased responsibilities after marriage and distress from financial problems, consistent with findings by Norvilitis et al. showing strong links between psychological and financial stress.

The mean anxiety subscale score was 12.42 out of 21, exceeding the cutoff of 7.23, indicating high anxiety levels. No significant correlations were found between anxiety and demographic factors. However, the relationship between financial satisfaction and anxiety is complex. This study measured satisfaction rather than income, while Archuleta et al. found an inverse correlation between financial satisfaction and anxiety using a different scale and sample composition. The discrepancy may be due to differing measures and participant backgrounds.

Depression was significantly more prevalent among medical students compared to students of other medical sciences, with $p = 0.003$. The heavier academic load, less rest, and higher perfectionism among medical students likely contribute to this difference. Depression prevalence was also higher among married students. Although no correlation between financial situation and depression was found in this study, larger cohort studies have shown that financial stress predicts depression over time. Depression and anxiety commonly co-occur and can impair concentration, learning, and memory, resulting in lower academic performance.

The mean GPA of respondents was 15.69 with a standard deviation of 1.31. Academic achievement showed no significant correlation with general health ($p = 0.37$). However, the students' major was significantly correlated with GPA, as medical students had lower averages than other medical sciences students, likely due to more difficult coursework. No significant gender differences in academic performance were found, contrasting with other longitudinal research suggesting females outperform males. Financial and marital status were also unrelated to academic success.

A strong positive correlation was found between academic achievement and achievement motivation. Students with higher motivation achieved better results, a finding supported by multiple prior studies suggesting that motivation enhances learning and mediates academic success. Achievement motivation was influenced by marital status, with unmarried students showing higher motivation, possibly due to fewer non-academic responsibilities. No gender differences in motivation were found, though Feizi Pour et al. reported that women tend to be more educationally motivated. Achievement motivation was negatively correlated with GHQ scores, meaning that students with poorer mental health were less motivated and consequently less successful. Since

mental disorders were more prevalent among married students, their lower motivation can be explained by this connection.

The study had several limitations. It was cross-sectional, preventing causal conclusions. Financial status categories such as good, moderate, or poor were based on subjective self-report rather than specific income thresholds. Data were collected from a single university, and first-year students were not included. The number of unmarried students greatly exceeded married ones, and the narrow age range limited variability. Overall, the results highlight that mental health problems are highly prevalent among medical sciences students, with anxiety and depression being key issues linked to lower academic motivation and success. Marital and financial stress further exacerbate psychological distress, while motivation plays a crucial role in improving academic performance despite mental health challenges.

Engaging in regular physical activity may reduce anxiety symptoms, as it influences brain chemistry and promotes relaxation. Making dietary changes, such as reducing alcohol, tobacco, and caffeine intake while maintaining a nutrient-rich diet, may help stabilize mood and reduce anxiety. Practicing mindfulness techniques like meditation, deep breathing, and consuming chamomile tea can foster calm and alleviate anxiety symptoms. Anxiety is related to the body's natural stress response, which helps individuals stay alert, motivated, and prepared for risks. However, when stress becomes persistent, it can lead to anxiety disorders or other mental health conditions. Natural strategies may be effective in managing anxiety.

Anxiety is the body's natural reaction to stress, producing feelings of fear or worry influenced by genetic, environmental, and chemical factors. Common symptoms include increased heart rate, rapid breathing, restlessness, and difficulty concentrating. It can also manifest through other symptoms such as urges to defecate, itching, sweating, panic attacks, nightmares, or intrusive thoughts. Persistent anxiety about real or imagined events may indicate an anxiety disorder, which includes generalized anxiety disorder, panic disorder, PTSD, OCD, phobias, social anxiety disorder, separation anxiety, and illness anxiety.

Regular physical activity can reduce anxiety significantly. A 2021 study involving around 400,000 participants found that physically active individuals had about a 60 percent lower risk of developing anxiety symptoms over a 21-year follow-up period. Exercise diverts attention from anxious thoughts and affects brain chemicals such as serotonin, GABA, BDNF, and endocannabinoids, all of which are linked to relaxation and reduced anxiety. The American Psychological Association notes that consistent exercise enhances concentration and self-control. High-intensity activities like running or HIIT can raise heart rate effectively, while low-impact workouts like yoga and Pilates are also beneficial for anxiety relief.

Limiting alcohol intake may help regulate mood, as excessive drinking disrupts neurotransmitters involved in mood regulation. This imbalance can increase anxiety symptoms. Studies from 2016 and 2019 have shown that anxiety and alcohol use often co-occur, and reducing alcohol intake can improve symptoms of both anxiety and depression. Chronic alcohol use also disrupts sleep, as shown by a 2022 study over 36 years, and poor sleep contributes to anxiety. Although anxiety may temporarily worsen when alcohol consumption stops, symptoms typically improve over time.

Tobacco use is strongly linked to anxiety. Evidence from 2020 and 2023 studies shows that individuals with anxiety are more likely to smoke, and quitting smoking leads to significant improvement in anxiety symptoms. Nicotine and other chemicals alter brain pathways involved in anxiety and panic disorders. The CDC recommends replacing cigarettes with alternatives like gum or toothpicks and building a support system to aid cessation.

Limiting caffeine is another effective strategy. Caffeine can trigger or worsen anxiety and panic attacks, as demonstrated by a 2022 review of 10 studies. The DSM-5-TR even recognizes caffeine-induced anxiety disorder, where caffeine consumption disrupts daily functioning. Caffeine blocks adenosine, the brain chemical responsible for tiredness, and increases adrenaline, which activates the fight-or-flight response. While moderate caffeine consumption is safe for most people, gradual reduction is recommended to avoid withdrawal symptoms.

Quality sleep is essential for managing anxiety. Despite nearly one-third of adults sleeping less than six hours per night, the CDC recommends at least seven hours. Better sleep hygiene includes going to bed when tired, avoiding screens and heavy meals before bed, maintaining a dark and cool room, and following a consistent sleep schedule. Writing down thoughts before bed and getting up instead of tossing and turning can also improve sleep quality.

Meditation and mindfulness are proven techniques for reducing anxiety. These practices promote awareness of the present moment and help manage thoughts and emotions nonjudgmentally. Mindfulness-based therapies, including mindfulness-based stress reduction and mindfulness-based cognitive therapy, have shown effectiveness comparable to antidepressants like Lexapro. Regular mindfulness practice can help regulate stress and reduce anxiety symptoms long-term.

Diet plays a significant role in anxiety management. Low blood sugar, dehydration, and processed foods can affect mood stability. A high-sugar diet may worsen anxiety, while a balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, and complex carbohydrates helps stabilize mood and energy. Staying hydrated and avoiding processed foods can further alleviate symptoms.

Deep breathing exercises are a simple yet effective method for reducing anxiety. Anxiety often causes shallow and rapid breathing, which can lead to dizziness or panic attacks. Practicing slow, controlled breathing helps restore normal breathing patterns, calm the body, and reduce anxiety symptoms in real time.

Aromatherapy, which involves using essential oils from natural plant extracts, can promote relaxation, better sleep, and emotional balance. Essential oils such as lavender, bergamot, ylang-ylang, grapefruit, and clary sage are believed to help relieve anxiety. Aromatherapy can be practiced through diffusers, baths, or direct inhalation. However, since the FDA does not regulate essential oils, users should consult healthcare professionals and test products carefully before use.

Chamomile tea has been shown to help reduce anxiety symptoms. A 2016 clinical trial involving participants with generalized anxiety disorder found that long-term chamomile use was safe and effective in reducing symptoms, though it did not prevent recurrence. The calming effect of chamomile is attributed to the flavonoid apigenin, which binds to GABA receptors similarly to anti-anxiety drugs like Xanax. Drinking chamomile tea regularly can therefore be a natural supplement to anxiety management strategies.

In conclusion, anxiety is a normal response to stress that can become problematic if persistent. Natural methods such as regular physical activity, healthy eating, mindfulness, proper sleep, and reducing stimulant or substance use can help manage anxiety symptoms effectively. These approaches work by influencing brain chemistry, improving lifestyle balance, and enhancing overall emotional well-being.

Design Your Budget

A budget helps you organize your finances and control your spending. Many students make the mistake of including only daily expenses and forget occasional ones like snacks, travel, entertainment, or online subscriptions. Create a budget that covers all spending categories such as

food, phone bills, rent, travel, and leisure, and revise it regularly. Set aside a specific percentage of your monthly allowance or income as savings. You can also use budgeting apps like Walnut, Money Manager, or Goodbudget, which are popular in India, to automate and track your financial plan.

Identify Your Expenses

Track where your money comes from and where it goes. This awareness helps you identify areas of overspending and wasteful expenditure. Keep a simple record using Excel or mobile apps like Money Lover, ET Money, or Walnut to track your expenses. Categorize your spending into essential and non-essential items. Once you understand your spending patterns, start cutting down on unnecessary expenses to improve your financial discipline.

Look for Student Discounts

Students can benefit from discounts on a variety of services and products, from transport to entertainment. Use your student ID to access discounted movie tickets, public transport passes, or lower subscription rates for streaming platforms like Spotify or YouTube Premium. Many government schemes such as the National Digital Library of India (NDLI) or student concession programs for Indian Railways also provide benefits to students. Always verify available discounts before making purchases and only spend on what you genuinely need.

Automate Your Savings

Automating your savings ensures that a portion of your income or pocket money goes directly into a savings account before you can spend it. Many banks in India, such as SBI, HDFC, and ICICI, offer automatic transfer or recurring deposit (RD) options that let you save small amounts monthly. This helps build a financial cushion for emergencies. You can also explore digital savings tools like Paytm Payments Bank or Fi Money to set up automatic savings goals and track your growth easily.

Reduce Automated Payments

Avoid automatic renewals of subscriptions or services you rarely use. Check your Google Play or iTunes account and cancel unnecessary subscriptions. Platforms like Netflix, Amazon Prime, and Spotify automatically renew, and these costs add up quickly. Use UPI apps like PhonePe or Google Pay to manually approve transactions so you stay aware of where your money is going. Instead of paying for multiple services, choose one and save the rest for essentials or future needs.

Keep Track of Money You Borrow From Friends

Borrowing among students is common, but it can lead to tension if you forget repayments. Keep a note of every amount borrowed or lent using apps like Splitwise or a simple notes app. Repay borrowed money promptly and avoid unnecessary borrowing. Maintain a clear distinction between your income and borrowed money. This habit will teach you accountability and improve your money management skills over time.

Buy Your Stationery and Books at Once

Books and stationery can become costly when bought frequently. Purchase in bulk at the start of the semester to take advantage of bulk discounts. Many Indian e-commerce sites like Amazon, Flipkart, or BookChor offer discounted rates for bulk purchases. You can also explore second-hand books through OLX, Quikr, or campus exchanges. Government schemes such as the National Book Trust and the National Mission on Education through ICT provide affordable and even free academic resources online.

Avail Discounts Online

Online shopping platforms often offer lower prices than physical stores because of reduced overhead costs. Websites like Flipkart, Amazon, and Meesho frequently have student and festival discounts. Educational software, courses, and laptops are also available at reduced prices through

schemes like Dell's Student Purchase Program or Apple's Education Pricing. However, always ensure you buy what you need and not just because something is on sale.

Eat at Home

Food expenses can take up a large portion of your budget. Learning to cook simple meals at home not only saves money but also promotes a healthier lifestyle. You can plan weekly meals and use affordable local ingredients. Apps like BigBasket and Blinkit can help you buy groceries at lower rates with discounts and cashback offers. Additionally, if you're living in a hostel, use the mess facility regularly instead of eating out frequently.

Check Out Investment Options

If you have leftover money after covering your needs, consider small-scale investments. Begin with low-risk options like a recurring deposit, Public Provident Fund (PPF), or a National Savings Certificate (NSC). Students above 18 can also explore investment platforms like Zerodha or Groww to learn about mutual funds and SIPs. Government-backed schemes like the Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana (for girls) or Post Office Savings Schemes offer safe investment avenues for beginners.

Get a Part-Time Job

A part-time job helps you earn while studying and builds professional skills. Look for internships or freelance opportunities through platforms like Internshala, LinkedIn, or Naukri.com. Campus jobs or tutoring can also provide a steady income. You can also participate in the National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS), which provides stipends for skill development. Earning your own money gives you independence and strengthens your budgeting habits.

Be Mindful of Student Loans

Before taking an education loan, explore scholarships and grants. The Indian government offers several schemes like the National Scholarship Portal (NSP), Central Sector Scheme of Scholarship for College and University Students, and the Prime Minister's Scholarship Scheme. If loans are unavoidable, research repayment options carefully and choose banks with low interest rates such as SBI Student Loan Scheme or HDFC Credila. Always repay loans on time to avoid compounding interest and financial strain after graduation.

Avoid Credit Card Debt

Credit cards can provide convenience but also carry the risk of high-interest debt if not managed carefully. Avoid taking a credit card unless necessary and always pay off the full amount each month. For students, it's better to use prepaid cards or UPI wallets like Paytm, Google Pay, or BHIM to manage transactions safely without the risk of debt. Responsible use of digital payment systems helps you build financial discipline without the burden of repayment stress.

Government financial literacy programs such as the National Centre for Financial Education (NCFE) and RBI's Money Kumar initiative can help students understand money management better. You can also explore the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) to open a zero-balance savings account, making it easier to save and access banking facilities.

The benefits of regular exercise are widely recognized, but its impact on academic performance and mental health is often overlooked. For students, the relationship between physical activity and academic success is becoming increasingly evident, as exercise not only strengthens the body but also boosts cognitive function, focus, and emotional well-being. BGS Vijnatham School emphasizes the importance of integrating regular exercise into the daily routines of students, promoting both physical fitness and academic excellence.

1. Improved Cognitive Function

Research has shown that regular exercise enhances cognitive function, particularly in areas related to memory, attention, and problem-solving. When students engage in physical activities, their brain receives increased blood flow and oxygen, which promotes neurogenesis (the creation of new neurons) and improves the overall function of the brain.

Aerobic exercises like running, swimming, and cycling have been found to stimulate brain regions related to learning and memory, making it easier for students to retain and apply new information. This boost in cognitive function directly translates into better academic performance, as students are able to concentrate more effectively and process information with greater ease.

2. Enhanced Focus and Attention

One of the major challenges students face in today's fast-paced world is maintaining focus and attention during lessons and study sessions. Exercise can help tackle this issue by enhancing students' ability to concentrate. Physical activity increases the production of neurotransmitters like dopamine and norepinephrine, which are linked to improved focus and attention spans.

Students who exercise regularly are better equipped to handle classroom distractions and stay engaged with their studies. Activities such as yoga and mindfulness exercises, which are often incorporated into school programs, have been shown to enhance students' attention, improve self-regulation, and reduce impulsivity.

3. Stress Reduction and Improved Mental Health

The academic pressures students face can often lead to stress, anxiety, and even depression. Regular physical activity is a natural and effective way to combat these mental health challenges. Exercise triggers the release of endorphins—often called "feel-good" hormones—that help reduce stress and anxiety while improving mood.

For students dealing with academic stress, regular exercise provides an outlet to release tension, clear the mind, and reduce feelings of overwhelm. Schools like BGS Vijnatham School recognize the importance of exercise for mental health, offering a range of sports and physical activities that help students manage stress and improve their emotional well-being.

4. Increased Energy Levels

It may seem counterintuitive, but regular exercise actually boosts energy levels. Physical activity helps improve cardiovascular health, strengthens muscles, and enhances stamina, all of which contribute to increased energy throughout the day. For students, this means less fatigue and more enthusiasm for engaging in academic activities.

Regular exercise also helps regulate sleep patterns, which is essential for maintaining high energy levels. Students who exercise regularly are more likely to experience better-quality sleep, leaving them well-rested and ready to tackle academic challenges with energy and focus.

5. Improved Time Management and Discipline

Incorporating regular exercise into a student's routine requires time management and discipline—skills that are essential for academic success. When students learn to balance physical activities with their studies, they develop a sense of responsibility and structure that can help them manage their academic workload more effectively.

Physical activity promotes discipline, as students must commit to regular practice sessions, adhere to training schedules, and set personal fitness goals. These same principles of discipline and goal-setting can be applied to their academic studies, leading to better study habits and time management.

6. Boosted Self-Esteem and Confidence

Exercise plays a critical role in boosting self-esteem and confidence, both of which have a direct impact on academic performance. When students engage in physical activities and achieve personal fitness goals, they feel a sense of accomplishment and pride. This confidence can carry over into their academic life, encouraging them to take on challenges and approach schoolwork with a positive mindset.

Additionally, students who feel physically fit and healthy are more likely to participate actively in classroom discussions, extracurricular activities, and leadership opportunities. This enhanced self-esteem not only contributes to better academic outcomes but also fosters personal growth and social development.

7. Social Interaction and Teamwork Skills

Many physical activities, especially team sports, provide students with opportunities to develop social and teamwork skills. Sports encourage collaboration, communication, and leadership—qualities that are also valuable in academic settings. By participating in team sports, students learn how to work with others, resolve conflicts, and achieve shared goals.

These social skills are transferable to the classroom, where group projects and collaborative learning environments require students to engage with peers, share ideas, and work toward common objectives. Regular participation in sports and group activities also helps students build friendships and social networks, which are important for their overall well-being.

This review explains how physical activity and exercise can improve mental health by affecting both the body and the brain. Research using keywords like exercise, physical activity, and mental health shows strong evidence that regular exercise helps reduce symptoms of stress, depression, anxiety, and other mental illnesses while improving mood, self-esteem, attention, and sleep quality. Exercise affects the brain's chemical systems by increasing endorphins and endocannabinoids, which create feelings of pleasure and relaxation, and by regulating hormones like cortisol that are linked to stress. It also promotes better immune function and brain health by increasing brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF), which supports memory and learning.

Indian studies show similar benefits, with yoga being particularly effective due to its cultural relevance and accessibility. Yoga combines breathing, meditation, and relaxation techniques that improve emotional stability and physical balance. It has been used as an additional treatment for anxiety, depression, and even schizophrenia. For people with schizophrenia, yoga and physical activity can reduce negative symptoms, improve mood, and counter side effects from medication. However, yoga should be guided carefully since patients' participation and motivation levels can vary.

Exercise is also useful in treating alcohol dependence and substance abuse. Regular physical activity helps reduce cravings, relieve stress, and improve overall health. Studies show that people who exercise as part of their recovery consume less alcohol and experience fewer relapses.

Sleep is another area where physical activity plays a major role. Regular exercise helps improve both the quantity and quality of sleep, increases deep sleep stages, and reduces light sleep and insomnia symptoms. This leads to better mood and cognitive performance, especially in individuals with mental illness.

Exercise has a particularly strong effect on depression and anxiety. Physical activity stimulates the release of endorphins, which elevate mood and reduce feelings of hopelessness and worry. Studies

show that exercise can be as effective as antidepressants for mild to moderate depression, and yoga or moderate aerobic activity can be a safe and inexpensive treatment option.

Overall, exercise, yoga, and other forms of physical activity serve as effective and accessible complementary treatments for a wide range of mental health conditions. They enhance mood, reduce anxiety and depression, improve cognitive performance and sleep, and can be integrated into mental health programs to promote both physical and emotional well-being.

Loneliness is a common experience and can affect anyone, even when surrounded by people. Some may feel isolated even in social settings, while others may enjoy being alone without feeling lonely. Many young people experience loneliness, with almost 10% reporting feeling often lonely and nearly 70% having felt alone at some point during the pandemic. Feeling lonely is normal and does not mean something is wrong with you.

Loneliness can bring feelings of being unimportant, unwanted, or invisible. People may feel safer being alone to avoid rejection, or numb when feeling lonely. There may be a sense of lacking meaningful relationships or someone to share good news with, and loneliness can even occur in the presence of others. These experiences are common, and acknowledging them is a first step toward managing loneliness.

There are practical strategies to cope with loneliness and build emotional well-being:

Recognize that loneliness is universal and that you are connected to others worldwide experiencing similar feelings. You have the power to make positive changes in your life through reflection, relaxation, and trying new hobbies. Creativity can be a way to process and express your feelings through art, writing, or other creative outlets. Support is available through friends, family, and professional services, and it is important to reach out when needed. Focus on building quality relationships rather than quantity, and invest time in strengthening meaningful connections.

Hobbies and personal interests are valuable for growth and enjoyment. Expressing emotions in healthy ways, such as journaling, doodling, or recording your thoughts, helps you process feelings. Understanding that guilt and shame around loneliness are not your fault is important. Embrace your uniqueness and recognize that not following the crowd does not mean you are alone. Opening up to trusted people is a courageous way to foster connection.

Be mindful of social media use, and create distance if it triggers negative feelings. Join communities based on shared interests, hobbies, or beliefs to find supportive connections. Spending time in nature, even in small ways, can promote peace and connection with yourself. Practice self-kindness and treat yourself with small gestures of care, recognizing that taking care of yourself is important. Gratitude can help shift focus to small positive moments in daily life, such as accomplishing a task or noticing something beautiful around you.

These strategies help normalize feelings of loneliness, promote emotional resilience, and support the development of meaningful social connections.

Inequality and Mental Health in India

Economic and Social Inequality

Although India's economy has grown, the benefits are unevenly shared. The richest 1% own 73% of the country's wealth, while the bottom 50% hold just 1%. Social inequalities exist across caste, religion, gender, and region, affecting access to education, healthcare, and opportunities. The

Human Development Index (HDI) drops significantly when accounting for these inequalities, showing that India's development is uneven.

Inequality in Education

Education gaps are large: urban rich children spend far more on education than rural or disadvantaged children. Social class, caste, and parental education strongly affect educational outcomes. Children from lower socio-economic backgrounds often face challenges such as lack of parental support, poor resources, and early dropouts, creating a cycle of disadvantage.

Impact on Mental Health

Income and social inequality are linked to mental health problems. About 1 in 7 people in India experiences a mental disorder, with prevalence rising over time. Mental health issues are more common among disadvantaged groups due to financial stress, limited access to healthcare, and lower educational attainment. Young people, especially students, are particularly vulnerable. Mental health challenges in adolescence can affect academic performance, social relationships, and future opportunities.

Access to Mental Health Services

Most mental health services are expensive and not covered by insurance, especially for outpatient care. Only 14% of rural and 19% of urban populations have health expenditure coverage, making treatment difficult for low-income families. Awareness about mental health is also low, and stigma remains a barrier.

Recommendations

Reduce socio-economic inequality: Implement social security and redistribute resources to support disadvantaged groups.

Provide quality education: Improve access, reduce dropouts, and support children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

School-based mental health services: Establish counseling and mental health support in schools to detect and address issues early.

Focus on rural youth: Provide free or low-cost mental health services, along with awareness campaigns to reduce stigma.

Combine interventions: Integrate social, educational, and mental health programs to strengthen resilience among disadvantaged students.

Key Takeaway

Inequality in India affects both educational and mental health outcomes. Addressing these disparities through social support, education, and accessible mental health services can improve individual well-being and contribute to a healthier, more productive society.