



 Research Article

INSIGHTS INTO PERCEIVED STRESS: PREVALENCE AND PREDICTORS AMONG MEDICAL STUDENTS AT EBONYI STATE UNIVERSITY ABAKALIKI, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the prevalence and predictors of perceived stress among medical students at Ebonyi State University Abakaliki, Nigeria. Through a comprehensive survey, data on perceived stress levels and potential predictors such as academic workload, personal factors, and coping strategies were collected. Statistical analysis revealed the prevalence rates of perceived stress and identified significant predictors contributing to heightened stress levels among medical students. The findings offer valuable insights into the challenges faced by medical students and provide implications for interventions aimed at promoting mental health and well-being within the academic environment.

KEYWORDS

Perceived stress, Medical students, Ebonyi State University Abakaliki, Nigeria, Prevalence, Predictors, Academic workload, Coping strategies, Mental health.

INTRODUCTION

Medical education is renowned for its rigorous demands, intense academic workload, and high levels of stress, posing significant challenges to the mental health and well-being of medical students worldwide. In the context of Ebonyi State University Abakaliki, Nigeria, medical students encounter unique stressors related to academic pressures, personal responsibilities, and socio-cultural factors. Understanding the prevalence and predictors of perceived stress among these students is essential for designing targeted interventions and support systems to promote their mental health and academic success.

The academic environment plays a pivotal role in shaping the experiences and perceptions of stress among medical students. The demanding curriculum, competitive learning environment, and expectations for academic excellence contribute to heightened stress levels and psychological distress. Furthermore, the transition to medical school represents a significant life event characterized by adjustments to new academic and social roles, which may exacerbate stressors and challenge coping mechanisms.

Against this backdrop, this study aims to explore the prevalence and predictors of perceived stress among medical students at Ebonyi State University Abakaliki, Nigeria. By examining the multifaceted factors contributing to stress perception, including academic workload, personal characteristics, and coping strategies, the research seeks to illuminate the complex

interplay between individual, interpersonal, and institutional influences on student well-being.

The significance of this study lies in its potential to inform evidence-based interventions and support mechanisms tailored to the unique needs of medical students in the Nigerian context. By identifying key stressors and predictors, educators, administrators, and healthcare professionals can implement targeted strategies to mitigate stress, foster resilience, and promote a culture of well-being within the medical education community.

In the following sections, we will explore the methodology employed to investigate perceived stress among medical students, review relevant literature on stress in medical education, and present the findings and implications of this study for advancing student mental health and academic success at Ebonyi State University Abakaliki, Nigeria.

METHOD

The process of investigating perceived stress among medical students at Ebonyi State University Abakaliki, Nigeria, involved a systematic and comprehensive approach aimed at understanding the prevalence and predictors of stress within the academic context. Initially, participants were recruited from the medical student population using a convenience sampling method, ensuring representation across various academic levels and demographic characteristics.

A structured questionnaire was meticulously designed to collect data on perceived stress levels and potential predictors, including academic workload, personal factors, and coping strategies. The questionnaire incorporated validated scales such as the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) to assess stress levels accurately. Data collection was conducted through self-administered questionnaires distributed during class sessions or online platforms, adhering to ethical guidelines to ensure confidentiality and voluntary participation.

Statistical analysis formed the crux of data interpretation, with descriptive statistics used to summarize prevalence rates of perceived stress and the distribution of predictor variables among medical students. Inferential statistics, including correlation analysis and regression modeling, were employed to identify significant predictors contributing to perceived stress levels and explore potential relationships among variables.

Throughout the process, ethical considerations were paramount, with measures in place to protect participant confidentiality and respect their autonomy. Ethical approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board, affirming adherence to ethical guidelines governing research involving human participants.

The study recruited participants from the medical student population at Ebonyi State University Abakaliki, Nigeria. A convenience sampling approach was utilized to select participants, ensuring representation across different academic levels and demographic characteristics.

Participants were informed about the purpose and procedures of the study and provided voluntary consent to participate.

A structured questionnaire was designed to collect data on perceived stress levels and potential predictors among medical students. The questionnaire included validated scales such as the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) to assess perceived stress levels, as well as items addressing academic workload, personal factors (e.g., family support, financial concerns), and coping strategies (e.g., social support, time management).

Data collection was conducted through self-administered questionnaires distributed to medical students during designated class sessions or via online platforms for remote participants. Participants were provided with clear instructions on questionnaire completion and encouraged to respond honestly and thoughtfully. Confidentiality and anonymity of responses were ensured to promote candid disclosure.

The sample size for the study was determined based on considerations of statistical power and precision. Using standard sample size calculation formulas for prevalence studies and predictors analysis, an adequate sample size was determined to achieve the desired level of statistical significance and representativeness for the study population.

Quantitative data obtained from the questionnaires were analyzed using appropriate statistical methods. Descriptive statistics were

used to summarize the prevalence rates of perceived stress and the distribution of predictor variables among medical students. Inferential statistics, including correlation analysis and regression modeling, were employed to identify significant predictors of perceived stress and explore potential relationships among variables.

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the Institutional Review Board of Ebonyi State University Abakaliki, Nigeria, prior to data collection. The study adhered to ethical guidelines for research involving human participants, including informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and respect for participant autonomy and privacy.

While efforts were made to ensure the validity and reliability of data collection instruments, the study may be subject to limitations inherent in self-reported measures, including recall bias and social desirability bias. Additionally, the cross-sectional nature of the study limits causal inference and longitudinal assessment of stress dynamics among medical students.

Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable insights into perceived stress and its predictors among medical students at Ebonyi State University Abakaliki, Nigeria, offering a foundation for future research and intervention initiatives aimed at promoting student well-being and academic success.

RESULTS

The study on perceived stress among medical students at Ebonyi State University Abakaliki, Nigeria, revealed a notable prevalence of stress within the student population. Analysis of the data indicated that a significant proportion of medical students experienced moderate to high levels of perceived stress, with academic workload, personal factors, and coping strategies emerging as influential predictors of stress perception.

DISCUSSION

The findings underscore the multifaceted nature of stress experienced by medical students, reflecting the demanding nature of medical education and the challenges inherent in navigating academic responsibilities, personal obligations, and social pressures. Academic workload emerged as a prominent predictor of perceived stress, highlighting the rigorous demands of the medical curriculum and the need for effective time management and study strategies to mitigate stress levels.

Personal factors such as family support, financial concerns, and social relationships were also identified as important predictors of stress perception among medical students. The transition to medical school represents a significant life event characterized by adjustments to new academic and social roles, which may exacerbate stressors and challenge coping mechanisms. Cultivating strong social support networks and fostering resilience are

essential for promoting student well-being and mitigating the impact of stressors.

The study also underscored the importance of effective coping strategies in buffering against stress and enhancing student resilience. Positive coping strategies such as seeking social support, engaging in leisure activities, and maintaining a healthy work-life balance were associated with lower levels of perceived stress among medical students. Interventions aimed at enhancing coping skills and promoting self-care practices are critical for equipping students with the resources they need to navigate the challenges of medical education successfully.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study provides valuable insights into the prevalence and predictors of perceived stress among medical students at Ebonyi State University Abakaliki, Nigeria. The findings highlight the need for targeted interventions and support mechanisms to address the stressors inherent in medical education and promote student well-being. By fostering a culture of resilience, fostering social support networks, and promoting effective coping strategies, academic institutions can create environments that support student mental health and academic success.

Moving forward, collaborative efforts among educators, administrators, healthcare professionals, and students are essential for implementing evidence-based interventions and policies that prioritize student well-being and

create a supportive learning environment. By addressing the root causes of stress and promoting a holistic approach to student wellness, academic institutions can empower medical students to thrive academically, professionally, and personally.

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