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Depressive symptoms associated with loneliness and physical activities among graduate university students in Bangladesh: findings from a cross-sectional pilot studySatyajit Kundu¹, Jhantu Bakchi², Md. Hasan Al Banna³¹Department School of Public Health, Southeast University, Nanjing, China²Department of Public Health, North South University, Dhaka, Bangladesh³Department of Food Microbiology, Patuakhali Science and Technology University, Patuakhali, Bangladesh

Introduction: In low-resource settings like Bangladesh, there is a dearth of research on the mental health of university students. This pilot study aimed to identify the prevalence of depressive symptoms, loneliness, and physical activities as well as the associated factors of depressive symptoms among graduate students in a public university of Bangladesh.

Methods: This cross-sectional study was carried out among 323 graduate students between February 2019 and May 2019. By the convenience sampling technique, data were collected by a pretested, structured questionnaire. Depressive symptoms were assessed by the validated Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9) tool with a cut-off score of ≥ 10 vs. less; University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) loneliness scale was applied to assess loneliness, International Physical Activity Questionnaire (IPAQ) scale was used to measure physical activity level.

Results: The overall prevalence of depressive symptoms was 52% and about 43% of participants felt most lonely. About 32.8% of students were involved in low physical activity. Being female, from lower income families, having poor academic performance, experiencing shorter sleep time, lower physical activity, and being lonely were potential risk factors for depressive symptoms among graduate university students. A positive correlation was found between loneliness and depressive symptoms of students ($r=0.367$, $p < 0.001$).

Conclusion: The higher prevalence of depressive symptoms among Bangladeshi graduate university students suggests the need for situation analysis, confirmatory clinical diagnosis, in-depth qualitative explorations, and large-scale surveys to explore the burden of such disorders and design appropriate low-intensity interventions like implementing student counselling service, offering mental assistance or other mental health support program in the country.

Biography

Mr. Satyajit Kundu studied Bachelor of Science in Nutrition and Food Science at Patuakhali Science and Technology University, Bangladesh, and also completed his MS in Biochemistry and Food Analysis in 2019 from the same university. He then joined the research group of Lina Wang at the School of Public Health, Southeast University, China. Currently, he is doing Master of Public health (MPH) in China. He has published more than 10 research articles in SCI(E) journals and also several articles in SCOPUS indexed journals.

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