

TITLE: Does COVID-19 Affect Self-Reported Symptoms of ADHD in University Students?
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Abstract

Background:

Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is one of the most common neuropsychiatric disorders that affects both children and adults, interfering with and reducing the quality of social, school, or work functioning. With the addition of quarantine and restricted access to a daily routine, young adults are negatively impacted as they lose their environmental structure.

Objective:

To assess the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on ADHD symptoms in diagnosed and undiagnosed university students.

Methods: This prospective, observational, cross-sectional study used a quantitative survey to obtain demographics, COVID-19 history, and ADHD history. Following the background information, questions based on an ADHD self-report scale were used to determine the rate and presence of ADHD symptoms in the study population.

Results:

A total of 1,247 participants started the survey with 278 omitted for incomplete responses. Majority of the respondents were female and 62% of the study population were reported as being seen by a healthcare professional. Among all participants, 3 specific symptoms were reported as 50% worse than due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Symptoms included: difficulty sitting still during long lectures or meetings, difficulty with time management leading to procrastination, and distraction with noise, clutter, and movement.

Conclusion:

This evidence suggests that university students were more likely to have increased self-reported ADHD symptoms as a result of COVID-19 related changes in learning environment and modality. These changes include the limitations of quarantine, initiation of virtual learning platforms, and lack of classroom structure.