

Being a medical student in the shadow of the COVID-19 Pandemic: Psychological reactions of Turkish medical students, and their views on distance education and working on the front line

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Abstract

Background: The COVID-19 pandemic had significant effects on medical students. **Objectives:** This study aimed to investigate the psychological impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on preclinical medical students and determine their views about distance education and working on the frontline. **Methods:** A cross-sectional study was conducted on 722 preclinical medical students. Data were collected with an online questionnaire between 20 and 27 December 2020. A data collection form including questions about sociodemographic characteristics, opinions about distance education and frontline working, the Impact of Event Scale-Revised (IES-R), and the Insomnia Severity Index (ISI) scales was used for data retrieval. **Results:** The students' mean age was 20.7 ± 1.6 years, and 393 (54.4%) were female. Of the students, 699 (96.8%) were concerned about their education, 181 (25.1%) had post-traumatic stress disorder, and 171 (23.6%) had insomnia. Post-traumatic stress was higher in women compared to men ($\chi^2 = 3.916$, $p = 0.048$), in those who had acquaintances with COVID-19 compared to those who had not ($\chi^2 = 12.798$, $p < 0.001$), those who had a fear of COVID-19 contamination to their relatives compared to those who did not have such a fear ($\chi^2 = 34.463$, $p < 0.001$), those who followed COVID-19-related news on social media compared to those who did not follow such information ($\chi^2 = 8.250$, $p = 0.004$), and those who had a high level of anxiety about the interruption of their education compared to those who had less anxiety ($\chi^2 = 42.147$, $p < 0.001$). PTSD was significantly higher in those who had negative opinions towards distance education ($\chi^2 = 17.340$, $p < 0.007$), and those with internet connection and quota problems ($p < 0.001$ and $p = 0.007$ respectively). **Conclusion:** While students are experiencing the psychological effects of the pandemic, they also worry about the interruption of their education. Educators who prepare students for the upcoming pandemics should also be aware of the psychological effects and implement remedial interventions for their mental health

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