

Abstract

Students mental health is an important issue all over the world especially students at the college and university level. World Mental Health Survey among college students across 21 countries reported that 20.3% had experienced psychiatric disorder. Similar findings have also been reported from various states in India. India is in the third position in terms of number of higher education institutions after USA and China. Increase in students enrolment in higher education has associated with increase in mental health problems. On the other hand, religious practices was found to have helped them to cope with their depression, anxiety and stress and improved their mental health as well as well-being as found in many studies. The present study has tried to explore the relationship between religious practices of younger people and their mental health in terms of depression, anxiety and stress in the context of Indian society. It was also meant to find out how religious practices varied across students of college and universities in terms of their different personal and social indicators i.e., gender, age, habitat, family type, marital status and so on. The study also wanted to explore the association between religious practices by students and their levels of depression, anxiety and stress to see the effectiveness of the prior on the latter. In the current cross-sectional study on religious practices, 2210 college and university students from twenty one districts of West Bengal took part. The researcher used Religious Activity Scale (RAS) and DASS-21 as well as its Bengali translation, which were made by the researcher and checked for accuracy. The collected data was put through IBM SPSS software and then shown graphically in Microsoft Excel. The religious practices of students varied by gender, where they lived, their marital status, disability and previous history of mental health issues. The study found religious practices significantly associated with less depression, anxiety and stress and therefore increased mental health and well-being which confirms the existing evidences from previous studies on relationship between religiousness and mental health conducted in last few decades across the world.