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Levels of Socio-Economic Status as a predictor of Mental Health

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Abstract

Present study was designed to investigate the impact of socio-economic status on mental health and also to search the relationship between socio-economic status and mental health. As a sample 100 respondents were classified considering their levels of socio-economic status into high and low category into two equal groups. Product moment correlation was used to search the relationship between levels of socio-economic status with mental health. Comparison between high and low socio-economic status respondent was made using 't' Test of significance. For measuring mental health, questionnaire developed by Dr. R. D. Helode was used, and for measuring socio-economic status, scale constructed by Ranbir Singh & Satih Kumar was used. Findings of the study revealed positive significant relationship between levels of socio-economic status and mental health. However, significant variation exist between high and low socio-economic status respondents on mental health, where high socio-economic status respondent found superior over low socio-economic status subjects.

Key words: Mental Health, Socio-economic status

Introduction

Mental health is an important part of public health. According to the Swedish national public health report between 20 and 40 percent of the general population suffer from poor mental health – everything from severe psychiatric disorders such as psychosis to milder mental health symptoms such as nervousness, anxiety or sleeping problems. Whereas the most severe psychiatric disorders have not increased in the population in Sweden during last decades, there has been an increase in the prevalence of mental health symptoms since the beginning of the 1990s. Poor mental health has large economic and social consequences both for the individual and society. The costs to society for health care, sickness absence, disability pension and loss of production due to poor mental health were estimated to 50,000 million crowns in Sweden in 1997.

Results from previous studies show strong associations between mental health and e.g. social relations, income, working conditions and critical life events. In general, persons with low socio-economic status have poorer mental health than persons with high socio-economic status. Some lifestyle factors, such as physical activity, alcohol consumption and obesity have also been found to be related with mental health. In addition, domestic work has been found to be associated with mental well-being among women. There is a need for a better understanding of these associations in order to plan preventive activities and health care.

Socio-economic factors associated with mental health

Social relations are in many ways important for mental health. Social support is a protecting factor that acts