Assessing the Mental Health of Secondary School Students in the Light of COVID-19

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OBJECTIVES

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the lives of high school students as well. Prolonged confinement, social isolation, fear of the disease, or the loss of a close family member are all experiences that students may have endured. Our aim was to assess students' health and risk behaviours, relationships, and mental health after the fifth wave of COVID-19.

METHODS

A quantitative, cross-sectional study was carried out between 2022.03.01. and 2022.04.15. We selected Hungarian secondary school students between 15-20 years of age (N=150). Our self-administered questionnaire consisted of questions about socio-demographic factors, perceived health status, peer relationships, satisfaction with life and the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS).

RESULTS

The majority of our sample are girls, vocational students and were living in villages. The mean age is 16.85±1.51 years. Most of them spend two hours a day in front of the TV, and an additional three hours with other electronic tools in their free time. 20.8% of students have four, 19.8% have three, 18.8% have five close friends. 52.1% rate their health as „good", 31.3% as „appropriate". The mean score of their life satisfaction is 6.34±1.85. Average score of PSS was 31.74± 9.13. The mean PSS score of girls (33.07±9.07) are significantly higher than the boys' (25.88±6.96; p=0.001). There is no relation between age and PSS score (p=0.161), or the type of school (p=0.412).

CONCLUSIONS

The study showed significant stress and symptoms of mental problems, especially among girls. The information revealed allows for a better understanding of the health indicators and psychological characteristics of adolescents. Our results provide information for the development of prevention programs, thereby contributing to the reduction of adolescents' behavioural disorders.

Variable	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Standard deviation
Age (yrs)	16.85	15	20	1.51

Question	Variable		Cases (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Girl		123	82%
	Boy		27	18%
Education	Vocational student		81	54%
	High school student		69	46%
Residence	Town		51	34%
	Village		99	66%

Table 1.
Background Characteristics of the Study Sample (n=150)

Perceived Stress Scale: 31,739 (SD=9,131)

Girls*** · Age · Type of school

*P<0,05 **p<0,01 ***p<0,001
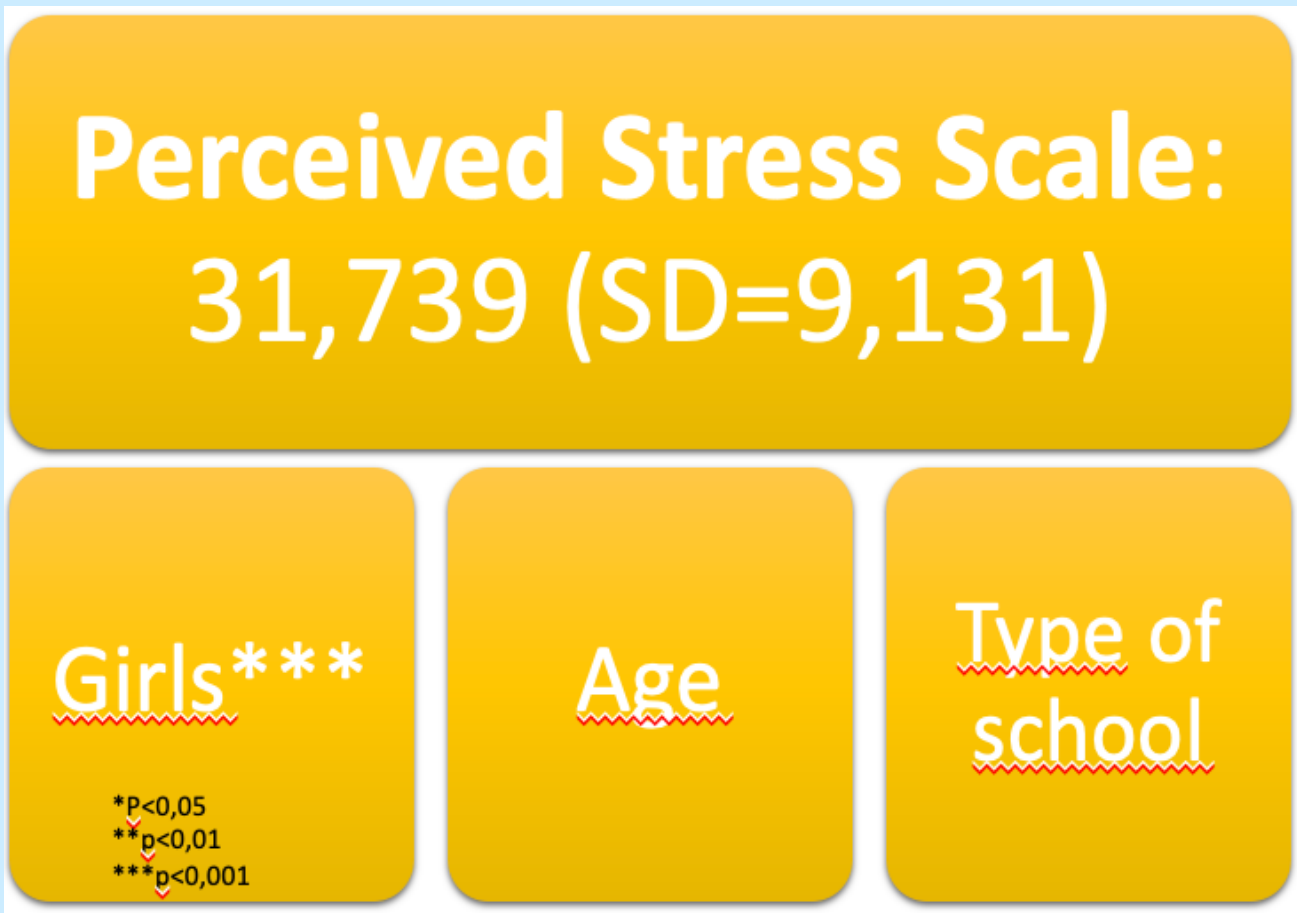
Figure 1.
Average score of Perceived Stress Scale (n=150)

five close friends 19% · one close friend 16% · two close friends 24% · three close friends 20% · four close friends 21%
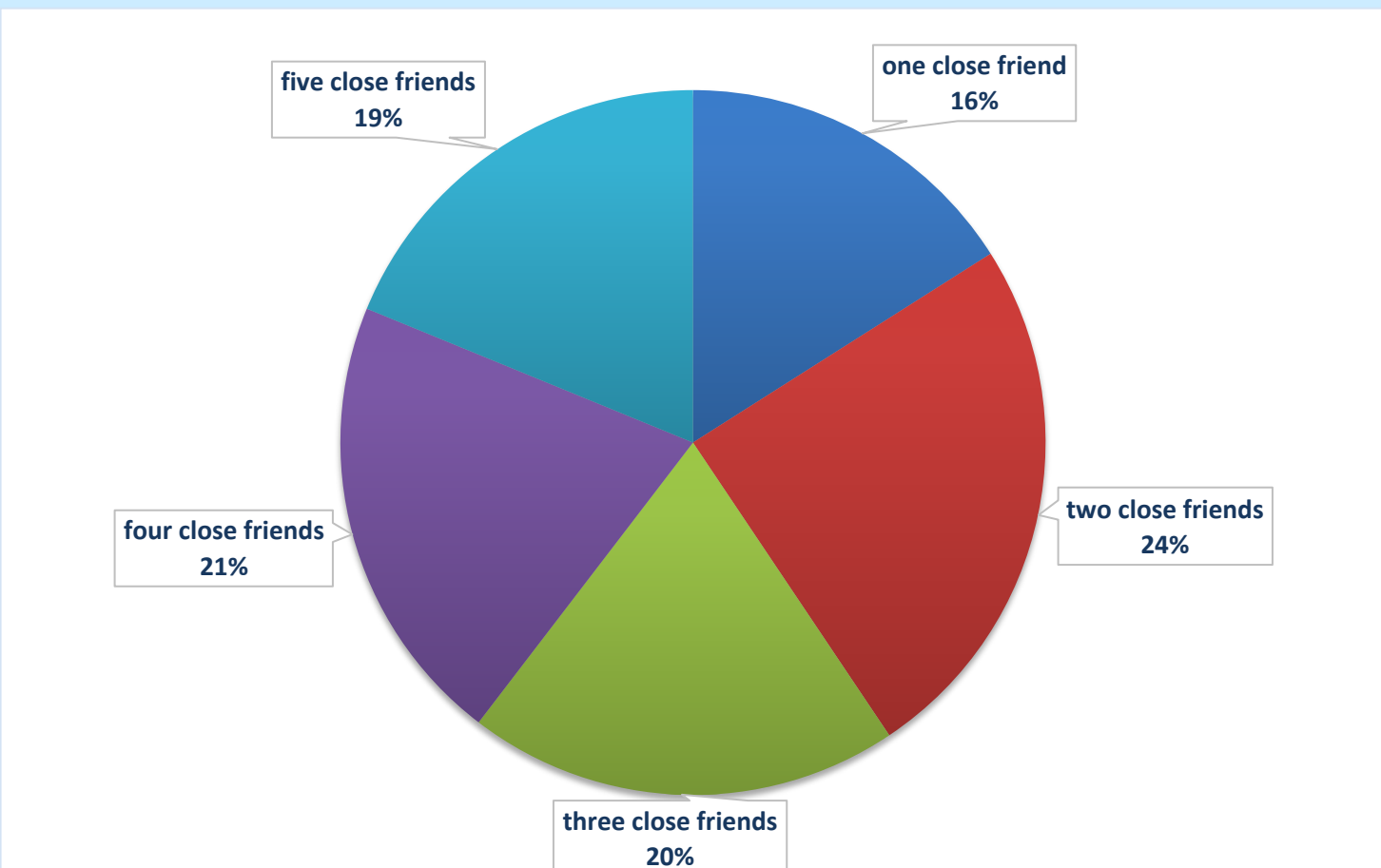
Figure 2.
Numer of close friends in the sample

Average minutes per day % (95% CI)	TOTAL	Girls	Boys
0-120 min	29.0 (26.0;32.1)	32.2 (28.1;36.5)	26.0 (21.8;30.6)
121-240 min	32.7 (29.7;35.8)	32.4 (28.2;36.9)	32.9 (28.7–37.5)
241-480 min	30.7 (27.7;33.2)	28.7 (24.7;33.0)	34.0 (29.7; 38.6)
›480 min	7.9 (6.0;9.5)	8.2 (5.9;11.2)	7.1 (5.0;9.8)

Table 2.
Internet use during the lockdown due to COVID-19

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