Triggers of Migraine Headaches in Kentucky College Students

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**PROBLEM**

- Migraine headaches are a severely debilitating condition, often resulting in absenteeism from work and migraines are ranked as the second leading cause of disability worldwide (Ruschel & Jesus, 2022).
- Migraine is considered fourth or fifth most common reason for yearly 3% of emergency visits (Ruschel & Jesus, 2022).
- Migraine prevalence increases in puberty, continue to increase until 35 to 39 years of age, but then later decreases after menopause (Ruschel & Jesus, 2022).
- A study (Rafi et al., 2022) of university students in Bangladesh during March 2020 found that 21.4% reported having a migraine headache in the past 3 months, females (29%) were significantly more likely to report a migraine when compared to males (12%) and triggers for migraines was due to stress (71%), irregular sleep (47%), and academic pressure (33%).

**PURPOSE & HYPOTHESIS**

- The purpose of this study is to assess the prevalence of migraine and migraine triggers of a group of Kentucky college students.
- It is hypothesized that there will be no differences in gender, stress, lack of sleep, skipping meals, substance use, and hormone-related migraine triggers for those with migraines versus those without migraines.

**METHODS**

**Participants:**
- The total number of participants in the study were 111 male and female college students enrolled in a regional Kentucky university.
- The target age group was age of 18 and older.

**Instrument:**
- The data were gathered using an online survey called the Migraine Headache Triggers Survey (MHTS) created by the researchers based upon clinical causes of migraine headaches found in the literature.
- The total number of questions in the final Migraine Headache Triggers Survey is 27 items.
- The first 3 items are demographic questions, 24 questions are regarding migraines, and behavior-related questions.

**Data Analysis:**
- Data analysis was performed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and Microsoft Excel.
- Data were analyzed using frequencies, percentages, means, ranges, logistic regression, chi-square tests and frequency tables.

**RESULTS & GRAPHICS**

**Results:**

- Results of the study indicated that the prevalence of migraine headaches was 64% among Kentucky college students (n=111).
- The study showed statistically significant (p<.05) results with skipping meals, and smoking/vaping whereas school-related stress (p=.07), and hormonal medication (p=.068) although not statistically significant, were approaching statistical significance as migraine triggers for those with migraines versus those without migraines.

**Implications/Conclusions:**

- The presence of smoking, skipping meals, stress, and hormones were significantly more frequent in migraineurs relative to those without migraines.
- The significance of this study is by understanding better the triggers of migraine headaches individuals may be more aware of how to avoid their headaches to improve the quality of life of migraineurs.
- It is important that further research should be conducted on larger sample sizes to identify the triggers of migraines and hopefully increase the awareness of this condition so that college students will be able to get the help they need and ways to avoid triggers to better succeed in academics and in life.

**REFERENCES**