



A study on Academic Stress, Anxiety, Depression, Resilience and Mental Wellbeing among College students

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ABSTRACT

Stress is inescapable among students in academics, and it has an impact on their performance in all academic pursuits. College students' academic stress, anxiety, and depression are a source of worry. Research suggests an individual's resilience and stress perception have a relationship with academic accomplishment, as well as a relationship between these two characteristics. The current research aims to study academic stress, anxiety, depression, resilience, mental well-being of college going students. Standardized tools were used to measure academic stress, anxiety, resilience, depression, and mental wellbeing among college students. The sample consisted of 50 college students from the age group from 18-25. The results found out that there is a negative significant correlation between Perceptions of Academic Stress and Mental Well-Being. Further, a negative significant correlation between Mental Well-being and Depression. The results also found out that there is a positive significant correlation between Depression and Anxiety & a positive significant correlation between Anxiety and Stress. It may be concluded from the findings that depression, anxiety, and stress are all highly linked which shows how much of hardship students are under in the current situation. To improve the quality of life and minimize stress among students, early interventions are required.

Keywords - Anxiety, Academic stress, Depression, Mental Health, Stress

Introduction

“Mental health problems don't define who you are. They are something you experience. You walk in the rain, and you feel the rain, but, importantly, you are not the rain.” — Matt Haig

Stress has been a topic of discussion in both academic circles and in our culture. Many cognitive scientists have conducted substantial research on stress and its impacts and come to the conclusion that the subject requires further emphasis. However, it is critical for society that students learn and acquire the necessary knowledge and skills so that they can contribute constructively to the nation's development in various ways.

When a person tries to cope with or adjust to pressures, they experience stress, which is characterized as a negative emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and physiological reaction. Circumstances are defined as stressors that drive people to adjust because they disrupt, or threaten to disrupt, their daily functioning. Grambling and Auerbach (1998) consider stress to be an undesirable state of being individuals' emotional and physiological arousal in situations that they view as dangerous or stressful posing a danger to their health. Further, most psychologists believe that moderate stress motivates people to achieve and fosters creativity, even though stress can make it harder for people to perform well on tough tasks.

Stress, on the other hand, is felt differently by different people and can imply different things to different people. It is defined as events or situations that cause people to feel tense, under pressure, or to experience negative emotions such as anxiety or rage. Others define stress as a physiological, emotional, and behavioral response to a situation, which includes physiological changes (increased heart rate and muscle tension), as well as emotional and behavioral changes (Bernstein et al., 2008). Stress is always thought of as a psychological process including an individual's personal interpretation and response to a potentially dangerous situation. It's vital to remember that stress has both positive and negative consequences for people. It suggests that stress could be a healthy, adaptive response to danger. Its purpose is to alert and prepare people to defend themselves. Take, for example, how dread of items that pose real threats encourages people to cope with or avoid them.

Stress, according to Auerbach and Grambling (1998), can lead to major difficulties if it is not appropriately controlled. Furthermore, when a person is exposed to prolonged stress, he or she is more prone to develop both physical and mental illnesses (including heart disease) (e.g., anxiety disorders). Health psychology is concerned with how stress affects biological function and how people might employ stress management approaches to avoid or limit disease.

Anxiety, behavioral issues, and impatience are just a few of the issues that students with high academic stress have reported (Deb, Strodl & Sun, 2015). Anxiety has a number of negative consequences for kids, including poor academic performance, poor decision-making, and, in the worst-case scenario, mental breakdown if not addressed, and it affects teenagers at alarming rates. In resource-constrained contexts, anxiety in teenagers has been reported to be higher than in the general population (Ovuga, 2016). Anxiety was also detected in stressed adolescents, and it has been connected to an inability to concentrate, fear of failure, and a poor outlook on the future.

A low mood that is frequently accompanied with sleep, energy, appetite, focus, hobbies, and sexual urge. Negative sentiments such as hopelessness, worthlessness, and powerlessness are also present. A mental state, a symptom, or a psychiatric disease can all be referred to as depression. A state of mind marked by chronic melancholy, a lack of energy and interest, and thoughts of death or suicide.

According to Kamble and Minchekar (2018), a study was conducted on Academic stress and depression among college students at Kolhapur Maharashtra. The results revealed that Academic stress and depression among college students varied significantly by gender. Among college students, there is a significant positive link between academic stress and depression. Student depression has a major impact on academic stress levels.

According to Srivastava and Singhi (2020), a study was conducted on Depression, Anxiety, Stress, and Family Affluence among College Students during the COVID-19 Pandemic. The results revealed that Stress and depression were found to be mild, although anxiety was moderate, in both males and females. There was also no significant gender difference in sadness, anxiety, or stress among college students. The findings reveal a link between sadness, anxiety, and stress, as well as family wealth.

Academic Stress

Academic stress can be viewed as chronic stress due to the nature of academic demands; it was associated with negative health outcomes of depression and physical illness (MacGeorge, Samter, & Gillihan, 2005).

Academic stress can be defined as a factor that may lead to some people experiencing stress when they are involved in a certain situation such as failure in examination, work overload, deadlines of assessment, financial problems, and so on.

According to Bataineh (2013), a study conducted in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia on undergraduate students, discovered that scholarly overloads, inconvenient courses, insufficient study time, and an ever-increasing workload semester, difficult examinations, limited motivation, and a large family of students were under moderate stress because of their expectations. It had also been found that fear of failure was discovered to be the most common source of stress among those surveyed students at the undergraduate level.

According to Deb, Strodl, Jiandong (2015) a study conducted at Queensland University of Technology, Australia on Indian High School Students. The findings discovered that nearly two-thirds (63.5%) of students said they were stressed because of academic pressure, with no significant differences in gender, age, or grade. As well as a few other personal considerations, about two-thirds of the pupils (66%) said their parents put pressure on them to do something they didn't want to do for improved academic results. The amount of parental pressure felt varied greatly depending on the parents' educational levels, the mother's occupation, the number of private tutors, and academic success. Children of fathers with a lower level of education (non-graduates) were shown to be more prone to perceive pressure to achieve better academically. Approximately one-third of the students (32.6%) showed signs of psychiatric illness, and 81.6 per cent reported exam-related anxiety. Academic stress was linked to parental pressure and psychiatric issues, whereas exam-related anxiety was linked to psychiatric issues as well.

Anxiety

Anxiety can be defined as a negative mood state that is accompanied by bodily symptoms such as increased heart rate, muscle tension, a sense of unease, and apprehension about the future (APA, 2013; Barlow, 2002). Further, it is defined as sweating palms (observable as sweat gland activity), increased heart rate (observable with heartbeat recording), and other observable physiological changes.

Anxiety is a state of apprehension, uncertainty, and fear resulting from the anticipation of a realistic or fantasized threatening event or situation, often impairing physical and psychological functioning (Spielberger, 1983)

According to Mutalik, Moni, Choudhari & Bhogale (2016) a study was conducted on Bagalkot undergraduate students. The results found out that undergraduate students are high on Depression, anxiety and stress.

According to Hassan and Vasugi (2019), a study was conducted among Postgraduate Students at a Public University in Malaysia. According to the study's findings, the majority of respondents suffer from mild depression, anxiety, and stress. Meanwhile, despair, anxiety, and stress all had high relationships. However, depending on demographic characteristics, there were no significant variations in the levels of depression, anxiety, or stress.

Depression

Fortunately, it is also treatable. Depression causes feelings of sadness and/or a loss of interest in activities you once enjoyed. It can lead to a variety of emotional and physical problems and can decrease your ability to function at work and at home. (American Psychiatric Association, 2013)

Depression is also linked to poor sleeping habits, academic regress, and mental health issues (Busari, 2012; Orzech, 2011).

Depression has a detrimental impact on pupils because it causes low life satisfaction, low self-esteem, and feelings of inadequacy, which can lead to considerable social, vocational, and educational impairment (Goswami, 2012).

“Mental health is a state of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community. (WHO, 2018)

According to Shamsuddin et al., (2013) a study was conducted among Malaysian university students. The results showed that according to the DASS-21 inventory, 27.5 per cent of students had moderate depression and 9.7 per cent had severe or extremely severe depression; 34 per cent had moderate anxiety and 29 per cent had severe or extremely severe anxiety, and 18.6 per cent had moderate and 5.1 per cent had severe or extremely severe stress.

Older students (20 and up) and those born in rural regions had significantly higher sadness and anxiety scores. When compared to pupils with middle earnings, older students (20 and up), females and those whose families had either low or high incomes had considerably higher stress levels.

Resilience

Resilience is an emergent property of a hierarchically organized set of protective systems that cumulatively buffer the effects of adversity and can therefore rarely if ever, be regarded as an intrinsic property of individuals (Roisman et al., 2002)

Hart et al., (2016) defined resilience as overcoming adversity, whilst also potentially changing, or even dramatically transforming, (aspects of) that adversity.

Resilience is the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or even significant sources of stress (APA, 2014).

According to Wu, Sang, Chi Zang, and Margraf (2020), a study was conducted among Chinese College Students. The results showed that First-year students and senior year students had higher negative mental health levels and lower positive mental health levels than junior year students. In cross-lagged structural equation modelling investigations, resilience was found to be a major predictor of mental health status in the short term, specifically between junior and senior years. However, in the long run, particularly between freshman and junior year, the predictive function of resilience for mental health is not significant.

According to Trigueros et al., (2020), a study was conducted among University Students. The results showed that Emotional intelligence was found to be a favorable predictor of resilience in the study. Resilience, on the other hand, was found to be a negative predictor of test anxiety and academic stress. Finally, the Mediterranean diet was found to be a negative predictor of test anxiety and academic stress.

Mental Well-Being

Mental well-being relates to a person's psychological functioning, life satisfaction and ability to develop and maintain mutually benefiting relationships. Psychological wellbeing includes the ability to maintain a sense of autonomy, self-acceptance, personal growth, purpose in life and self-esteem. Staying mentally healthy is more than treating or preventing mental illness. (Brown & Janmohamed, 2008)

In these trying times, it has become more important than ever to improve student mental health to prevent the known implications of continuous psychological distress and to mitigate any detrimental effects of the pandemic on mental health. (Lyons et al., 2010).

Mental health is a crucial component of having a successful and productive life (Cilar et al., 2019). Barriers to mental well-being that dwell within the higher education culture, practices, structures and learning conditions may be addressed through intervention in these areas (Hughes & Spanner, 2019).

According to Subramani and Kadiravan (2017) a study was conducted in Tamil Nadu on high school students. Academic stress has a substantial association with high school pupils' mental health, according to the findings.

According to Wyatt, Oswalt & Ochoa (2017) a study conducted in The University of Texas at San Antonio, on Mental Health and Academic Performance of First-Year College Students. The results showed that by classification, there were differences in mental health diagnoses, with first-year students reporting greater rates of self-injury and seriously considering suicide. Mental health variables have a greater impact on academic performance among upperclassmen.

Purpose

The purpose is to study Academic Stress, Anxiety, Depression, Resilience and Mental Well Being among college students.

Hypothesis

1. There will be a negative significant relation between Academic Stress and Mental Well-Being.
2. There will be a positive significant relation between Depression and Stress.
3. There will be a positive significant relation between Depression and Anxiety.
4. There will be a negative significant relation between Perceptions of Academic Stress and Resilience.

Procedure

The goal of the study was explained to the participants, and the surveys were filled out using Google forms. Each participant was thanked for their assistance. The participants were given standardized psychological tests to complete.

Measures

1. **Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS-21):** The Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale - 21 Items (DASS-21) is a collection of three self-report scales that assess depression, anxiety, and stress, developed by Lovibond & Lovibond (1995). It consists of 21 items on a 4 point Likert scale.
2. **Perceptions of Academic Stress (PAS) scale:** The Perceptions of Academic Stress was developed by (Bedewy and Gabriel, 2015) it is an 18-item scale on a 5 point Likert scale to measure perceptions of academic stress.

3. **Brief Resilience Scale (BRS):** The BRS as developed by (Smith, Dalen, Wiggins, Tooley, Christopher, & Bernard, 2008) is a six-item resilience test that focuses on the ability to bounce back from stress and adversity. On a 5-point Likert scale, responses range from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5).
4. **The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS):** as developed by Tennant et al., (2006). WEMWBS is a 14-item mental-health scale that covers subjective well-being and psychological functioning. All the items are positively worded and address components of good mental health. The scale is graded by adding up responses on a 1 to 5 Likert scale for each topic. The scale has a minimum score of 14 and a maximum score of 70.

Method

Sample

A total of 50 college students participated from across Pune City in the study. The age of the subjects ranges from 18 to 25 years.

Analysis Of Data

Results

Table 1: Shows N, Median and Standard Deviation

	Perception of Academic Stress	Mental Well Being	Depression	Anxiety	Stress	Resilience
N	50	50	50	50	50	50
Mean	52.3	47.4	25.1	23.9	26.5	3.13
Standard deviation	7.56	9.35	8.47	7.68	7.94	0.493

Table 2: Shows correlation matrix between all the variables

	Resilience	Perception of Academic Stress	Mental Well Being	Depression	Anxiety	Stress
Resilience	—					
Perception of Academic Stress	-0.379 **	—				
Mental Well Being	0.321 *	-0.310 *	—			
Depression	-0.238	0.054	0.368 **	—		
Anxiety	-0.155	-0.089	0.164	0.623 ***	—	
Stress	-0.050	0.047	0.247	0.573 ***	0.605 ***	—

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Discussion of Results

The results found out that there is a negative significant correlation ($r = -0.379$, $p < .05$) between Perceptions of Academic Stress and Resilience. The results found that there is a negative significant correlation between Mental well Being & Perception of Academic Stress ($r = -0.310$, $p < .05$). The results also found out that there is a positive significant correlation ($r = 0.321$, $p < .05$) between Mental Well-being and Resilience. Further, the results found out that there is a negative significant ($r = -0.368$, $p < .01$) correlation between Mental Well-being and Depression. The results found out that there is a positive significant correlation ($r = 0.623$, $p < .001$) between Depression and Anxiety and a positive significant correlation ($r = 0.573$, $p < .001$) between depression and stress. The results found out that there is a positive significant correlation ($r = 0.605$, $p < .001$) between Anxiety and Stress.

According to Reddy, Menon, Thattil (2018), a study was conducted on Academic Stress and its sources among University Students. The results found that personal inadequacy, fear of failure, interpersonal difficulties with teachers, teacher-pupil relationships, and poor study facilities were all investigated further, with gender inequalities discovered. Understanding the sources of stress will aid school psychologists and counsellors in developing effective counselling modules and intervention measures to help kids cope with stress.

According to Teh, Wei Ngo, Zulkifli, Vellasamy, Suresh (2015) a cross-sectional study conducted on Depression, Anxiety and Stress among 397 Undergraduate Students. The results found out that, Depression, anxiety, and stress were found to be prevalent in 30.7 per cent, 55.5 per cent, and 16.6 per cent of the population, respectively, with symptoms ranging from mild to severe. Multiple logistic regression reveals strong links between

depression and relationship status, social life, and total family income each month. There are significant links between ethnicity and monthly total family income and stress.

According to Yumba, (2010) a study conducted on academic stress, results revealed that Academic sources of stress revealed to be the most distressing for all students, as a result of the pressure resulting from course overloads and academic evaluation procedures. As least stressful, a number of personal, familial, and social elements were identified. Female first-year undergraduates reported higher levels of stress than male students.

In a review study by Bhujade (2017) it was suggested that mentor-trainee programs should be compulsory for all students in colleges as college students face a lot of psychiatric morbidities, emotional problems. Further, it was suggested that preventive measures such as counselling centers should be set up for college students.

Conclusion

With the constraints of employment, family, study, and other everyday commitments, college students' lives are extremely stressful. As a result, this research is valuable in gaining insight and understanding into the mental health of college students. It may be deduced from the study's findings that depression, anxiety, and stress are all highly linked. The majority of college students suffer from depression, anxiety, and stress, which are frequent psychological issues that can harm their professional development as well as their academic performance and everyday routines. Undergraduates can benefit from health education programmes, mentorship, and a reduction in information overload in the curriculum, all of which can help them cope more effectively with the demands of higher education. College students' mental health has to be treated more thoroughly, and college teaching approaches need to be scrutinized more closely. It is also advised that all colleges have a mandatory mentor-mentee programme. Each college should develop a student health committee composed of mental health professionals. Regular seminars and workshops for teachers and college students on various themes of psychological difficulties and their coping techniques should be held on a regular basis.

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