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Academic Stress and Coping behaviours among College Students

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ABSTRACT:

This study examined academic stress and coping behaviors among psychology and non-psychology college students. The objectives were to assess differences in stress levels and coping strategies between the two groups. A purposive sample of 30 students from colleges in Bareilly was selected, with equal representation from psychology (n = 15) and non-psychology (n = 15) disciplines. Data were collected using the Academic Stress Questionnaire (Akram, Khan, & Baby, 2013) and the Coping Scale (Hamby, Grych, & Banyard, 2013). Statistical analyses included mean, standard deviation, and independent t-tests. Results indicated that psychology students reported slightly higher academic stress (M = 45.8, SD = 15.49) compared to non-psychology students (M = 38.6, SD = 14.36), although this difference was not statistically significant (t = 1.31). Similarly, no significant differences were observed in coping behaviors between psychology students (M = 38.53, SD = 6.82) and non-psychology students (M = 40.4, SD = 6.75; t = 0.75). These findings suggest that academic stress and coping strategies are common across disciplines and may be shaped more by personal and contextual factors than by academic background. The study highlights the importance of developing broad-based interventions to support students' mental health and coping skills in higher education.

INTRODUCTION

Academic stress has become a major concern among college students, as it directly affects their mental health, academic performance, and overall well-being. Students are often pressured to meet academic expectations, manage time effectively, and prepare for examinations, which can result in psychological strain. According to Barman et al. (2023), academic stress arises when students perceive an imbalance between academic demands and their available coping resources. While stress is a common experience among all students, the way individuals cope with it often depends on their field of study, personal resources, and support systems.

Students in psychology and non-psychology disciplines may differ in their awareness and use of coping strategies. Psychology students are likely to have more exposure to concepts of stress management, emotional regulation, and mental health, which may influence their coping behaviors (Munjal & Mitra, 2024). In contrast, non-psychology students may rely more on general coping mechanisms such as avoidance or social support, without a deeper understanding of psychological processes. This difference makes it important to compare stress levels and coping behaviors across academic disciplines.

Previous studies have highlighted the negative consequences of unmanaged academic stress, such as depression, anxiety, poor academic performance, and low self-esteem (Deng et al., 2022). At the same time, research emphasizes that coping strategies—such as problem-focused coping, time management, and seeking social support—can help buffer these effects (Carver et al., 1989). Understanding the differences in coping between psychology and non-psychology students may provide insights into how educational programs can better support student well-being.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it addresses the growing concern of academic stress in higher education and explores the coping behaviors of students across different academic backgrounds. First, it contributes to psychological research by examining whether knowledge of psychology influences stress management in daily academic life. Second, it provides practical implications for universities, highlighting the need for stress management workshops, counseling programs, and academic support tailored to students from diverse disciplines. Third, the study may help educators and policymakers understand the importance of integrating mental health awareness into all academic programs, not only psychology.

By comparing psychology and non-psychology students, this research bridges the gap in existing literature and offers a more comprehensive understanding of how different groups of students perceive and respond to academic stress. Ultimately, the findings may guide the development of effective coping interventions, which are essential for improving students' academic success and psychological well-being.

Literature Review:

Yogesh and Kausik (2025) study the correlation between stress levels and coping strategies among college students, examining the roles of technology use and academic year. A convenience sample of 120 students was assessed through a structured Google Forms survey. Their findings indicated that technology usage was significantly associated with elevated stress levels ($\chi^2 = 24.484$, $p = .017$), and that **only professional counseling services** had a significant impact on reducing stress ($F = 2.676$, $p = .051$), while other strategies—such as time management, peer support, exercise, and mindfulness—did not significantly influence stress.

Ren, Sotardi, and Brown (2025) conducted a mixed-methods study, grounded in the transactional model of stress, to investigate sources of academic stress, coping strategies, and their effectiveness among university students during the COVID-19 pandemic. The sample comprised 193 students from a New Zealand university. Thematic analysis revealed eight major stressors, and exploratory factor analysis revealed three types of coping strategies: proactive (approach), support-seeking, and avoidance. Hierarchical regression analysis showed that proactive and support-seeking strategies were significantly associated with more effective stress management, whereas avoidant strategies were linked to poorer outcomes.

Hameed, Jabeen, and Hussain (2024) conducted a quantitative study to explore academic stress relates to students' coping strategies and whether these relationships differ between day scholars and hostel residents. The **objectives** were to examine the correlation between academic stress and coping mechanisms and to compare mean differences across residential statuses. Using a **cross-sectional research design**, the study sampled **200 university students**—100 day scholars and 100 hostel residents—from the University of the Punjab, selected through purposive sampling. The **results** revealed a significant positive correlation between academic stress and coping strategies overall ($r = .51$, $p < .05$). The study concluded that coping strategies significantly predict academic stress and that both stress levels and coping methods vary based on student residential status.

Sailo and Varghese (2024) conducted a comprehensive review of the phenomenon of academic stress among college students, specifically exploring its sources, effects, and coping mechanisms. Their **method** involved systematically searching databases such as PubMed and Google Scholar. The synthesis highlights that academic-related stressors—such as exam preparation, syllabus overload, and performance pressure—are the most prevalent, followed by interpersonal and intrapersonal factors. Notably, coping strategies adopted by students vary, with adaptive mechanisms like planning, problem-solving, and seeking social support contrasted against less effective, maladaptive responses such as avoidance and withdrawal.

Barman et al. (2023) aimed to understand the academic stress that college students in Shillong, Meghalaya experience, what causes it, and how they cope with it. The study involved **199 students**—71 male and 128 female—from various colleges in Shillong. Using the **Academic Stress Scale** adapted by Rajendran and Kaliappan (1990) and the **Brief-COPE scale**, the researchers measured stress levels and coping strategies. Their results showed that about **69.3 %** of the students experienced a **moderate level of academic stress**, with the **21–23 age group** being most represented among those reporting moderate stress. Regarding coping, **emotion-focused strategies** were most commonly used (**73.4 %**), followed by **problem-focused coping (68.3 %)**, and **avoidant coping (51.8 %)**—all at moderate levels of usage.

Joseph et al. (2021) aimed to assess academic stress and coping mechanisms among medical undergraduates at a large Midwestern university. The researchers used a cross-sectional design, surveying 400 medical undergraduates with questionnaires measuring stress and coping behaviors. They found that most students experienced moderate stress (77.3%), while a minority had mild (17%) or severe stress (5.7%). Coping ability was rated as average for 95% of students, poor in 3.8%, and good in 1.2%. Notably, male students used more passive emotional and problem-solving coping, whereas female students used more active problem-solving coping.

Methodology:

Objectives:

- To study coping behaviours among Psychology and non psychology students.
- To study academic stress among Psychology and non psychology students.

HYPOTHESES

1. There would be no significant difference in coping behaviours among Psychology and non psychology students.
2. There would be no significant difference in academic stress among Psychology and non psychology students .

VARIABLES:

Independent variables:

- Psychology students
- Non psychology students

Dependent variables:

- Coping behaviours

•Academic stress

Sample:

In this study total 30 students were chosen from Bareilly colleges through purposive sampling.

Research design:

All data were coded, and statistical analyses were conducted using the mean and t-test for dependent samples as statistical tools.

Tools:

1.Academic Stress Questionnaire (ASQ): This scale was developed by Mohd. Akram, Mohd. Ilyas Khan and Sahiba Baby (2013). It was used to indicate the extent of the source of stress in the students. It consists of 36 statements and a 4 point Likert scale.

2. Coping Scale: This scale was developed by Hamby, Grych and Banyard (2013). It was used for the assessment of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral methods of dealing with problems. It consists of 13 statements and a 4-point Likert scale.

RESULT:

Excel was used to evaluate the mean, Standard deviation, and T-test.

Table 1:

Mean , t-value, SD of academic stress among Psychology and non psychology students.

Variable	N	Mean	SD	T-Value
Psychology	15	45.8	15.49	1.31
Non Psychology	15	38.6	14.36	

Table 1 shows the academic stress among Psychology and non psychology students. The mean & SD of psychology students is 45.8 and 15.49. the mean and SD of Non Psychology students are 38.6 and 14.36. The **T-value= 1.31**

Table 2:

Mean, T-value, and standard deviation (SD) of the coping scale among Psychology and non-psychology students.

Variable	N	Mean	SD	T-Value
Psychology	15	38.53	6.82	0.75
Non Psychology	15	40..4	6.75	

Table 2 shows the coping scale among Psychology and non psychology students. The result revealed that there is no Significant difference in the coping scale among Psychology and non-psychology students.

The mean and SD of psychology students are 38.53 and 6.82. The mean and SD of Non Psychology students are 40.4 and 6.75. The **T-test 0.75**.

DISCUSSION:

Table 1 highlights the academic stress levels among psychology and non-psychology students. The mean score for non-psychology students was 38.6 (SD = 14.36), while psychology students reported a higher mean of 45.8 (SD = 15.49). Despite this observed difference, the t-value of 1.31 indicates that the difference is not statistically significant. This suggests that although psychology students may experience slightly higher academic stress, the variation is not enough to confirm a meaningful distinction between the groups. Academic stress appears to be a common experience across disciplines, potentially influenced more by personal and institutional factors than by the field of study.

Table 2 presents the coping scale scores of psychology and non-psychology students. The findings indicate no significant difference between the two groups, as evidenced by the mean scores of 40.4 (SD = 6.75) for non-psychology students and 38.53 (SD = 6.82) for psychology students, with a t-value of 0.75. This suggests that both groups employ similar coping strategies despite differences in academic background. The similarity may imply that coping ability is influenced more by individual traits and external factors than by academic training in psychology. Thus, exposure to psychological concepts may not directly enhance coping effectiveness.

CONCLUSION:

The study aimed to compare coping strategies and academic stress levels between psychology and non-psychology students. The results revealed no significant difference in coping scale scores, indicating that both groups use similar coping mechanisms regardless of their academic discipline. Similarly, although psychology students showed slightly higher academic stress levels, the difference was not statistically significant. These findings suggest that coping abilities and academic stress are influenced more by individual and contextual factors than by the field of study. Therefore, interventions to improve coping and reduce academic stress should be broadly applied across student populations, rather than being discipline-specific.

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