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Co-relation between academic stress and mental well-being of college going students

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Abstract

This study dives into how college students' mental health is impacted by academic stress. Academic stress is a result of the pressure to do well in school and can cause a number of mental health issues. This study examines the causes of academic stress and its aftereffects, including sadness and anxiety, which can harm students' general wellbeing. The study was conducted at Acharya Narendra Deva University of Agriculture & Technology Ayodhya. A self-structured questionnaire through google forms were generated along with standardized scale Warwick Edinburgh mental wellbeing (2006) and used for collecting the data from 100 respondents. Frequency analysis & correlation analysis were employed for analyzing the data with the perusal of the results it was clearly visible that students going through high academic stress had low level of mental wellbeing, innversely propositional relationship was established between the two variables. Understanding the implications of academic stress is crucial for educators, policymakers, and mental health professionals to implement effective interventions and support systems that promote a healthier college environment for students.

Keywords: Academic stress, mental health, college students

Introduction

College is the place where young people who want to establish their job, passion and future come together with their impressionable minds, ideas and emotions. It is a place where people connect and get to know a variety of interesting people, make mistakes and grow as a result of all the experiences. At this age, young adults would begin to experience stress due to their exposure to the fiercely competitive and demanding modern world. Since students are seen as the cornerstones of society to come, stress can have a negative impact on their physical and mental health as well as their general well-being. Well-being is regarded as one of the most significant objectives that people pursue since it influences our level of happiness and contentment with life. However, when students experience stress as a result of academic obligations, it jeopardizes their academic performance and well-being, which is detrimental to both their immediate and long-term mental and physical health as well as the welfare of society. Stress is a common occurrence in everyday life that is caused by the body's normal physiological and psychological reaction to circumstances that are viewed as difficult or dangerous. Stress serves as a catalyst for problem-solving and confrontation. Nevertheless, prolonged exposure to it might have negative long-term impacts on the body and mind. (Flórez & Sánchez, 2020) ^[2].

Psychological well-being can be defined as a dynamic state where there is an acceptable balance between an individual's abilities, goals, and aspirations, as well as the possibilities and demands of their surroundings. Subjective well-being and psychological well-being are the two categories under which the term "well-being" is used broadly in the research on mental health. Happiness, contentment and a general lack of issues are characteristics of subjective well-being; on the other hand, challenges and personal development are characteristics of psychological well-being.

The results of some studies showed that, although psychological well-being is not significantly different for males and female, academic stress is significantly different. (Rajalakshmi VR and Baiju M, 2021) ^[1]. There is a positive correlation between having high levels of academic stress and the risk of experiencing declining mental health. (Olivera PC, *et al.*, 2023) ^[4].

Rational of the study

The aim of this study was to identify the psychological impact of the academic stress and pressure on college going students more specifically to identify the age-groups that are most vulnerable to low mental wellbeing and to identify the risk and protective factors associated with this population's mental health.

The purpose of this study was to provide an evidence-based

overview of the adverse mental health impacts on student's mental wellbeing and other challenging conditions and to highlight the importance of prioritizing and protecting the mental health of the students, particularly in the context of the academic stress and pressure.

The present study was planned with the following objectives

Objective

1. To identify college going students and their socio demographic profile.
2. To assess the impact of academic stress on mental well-being of college going students.
3. To analyze relationship between selected dependent and independent variables.

Methodology

1. **Research Design:** The research design was descriptive in nature.

Phase wise plan of work is as follows

- **Phase I:** Framing of objectives, designing of tools and identification of sample
 - **Phase II:** Collection of data from the selected sample
 - **Phase III:** Analysis of data and report writing
2. **Locale of the study:** The study conducted in rural area of Ayodhya district of eastern U.P. due to availability, convenience and easy accessibility of the samples.

3. **Sampling procedure:** A total of 100 students from Acharya Narendra Dev University of Agriculture and Technology were included in the study. The sample was chosen using purposive random sampling method.

4. Variables of the study and their operational definition

Independent variables: The variables which are not affected by change in any other variable are called independent variable or it changes on its own, nothing else in the study affects or changes it.

Mental well-being

- **Dependent variables:** In a research, the dependent variable is the variable that is being tested and measured and is 'depending' on the independent variable.

Academic stress and pressure

- **Tools and techniques used:** A self-structured questionnaire schedule (Google form) and Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale were used to collect data.
- **Analysis and interpretation of data:** Appropriate analysis of the collected data was done in the form of frequency percentage and co-relation.

Results and Discussion

Table 1: Distribution of the respondent on the basis of their socio demographic profile, (N:100)

Variables	Category	Percentage % & Frequency
Age (Years)	16-20	43(43%)
	21-25	41(41%)
	26-30	16(16%)
Gender	Male	44(44%)
	Female	56 (56%)
Educational Qualification	Intermediate	1(1%)
	Graduation	43(43%)
	Post Graduate	28 (28%)
	Research Scholar	16 (16%)
	Other	12(12%)
Marital Status	Unmarried	93 (93%)
	Married	7 (7%)
Religion	Hindu	97 (97%)
	Muslim	1(1%)
	Christian	2(2%)
Ethnicity	Rural	54(54%)
	Urban	46(46%)

Result in table no 1 showed distribution of the respondent on the basis of their socio demographic profile. Results revealed that 43 percent of the respondent were 16-20 year of age group followed by 41 percent of respondent 21-25 years age, 16 percent respondent belong to 26-30 years age group. Result also highlighted that (56%) more than half of the

respondents were female and 43% of respondents were graduate, 28 percent were post graduate, 16 percent were research scholar and most of the respondent (93%) were unmarried, majorly (97%) of the respondent followed Hindu religion and more than half (54%) of the respondent belonged to the rural area.

Table 2: Distribution of the respondent on the basis of their academic stress, N=100

S. No.	Statements	Yes F (%)	No F (%)
1	Do you feel academic stress can lead to feelings of anxiety and depression.	75(75)	25(25)
2	Academic pressure can negatively affect self-esteem	75(75)	25(25)
3	Academic stress can lead to physical health problems	86(86)	14(14)
4	Academic pressure can negatively impact social relationships.	80(80)	20(20)
5	Chronic stress can impair memory and cognitive function.	84(84)	16(16)
6	Stress can affect sleep patterns and lead to insomnia	91(91)	19(19)
7	Academic performance can be affected by stress.	85(85)	15(15)
8	Do you seek help or support when you are feeling overwhelmed by academic stress?	75(75)	25(25)
9	Academic stress have affects the motivation to study.	83(83)	17(17)
10	Teachers have understanding of academic stress and its impact on students.	69(69)	31(31)
11	Participation in extracurricular activities or hobbies to relieve academic stress	76(76)	24(24)
12	The academic institute provides enough resources for students to manage academic stress.	45(45)	55(55)
13	Have you ever experienced physically ill due to academic stress?	62(62)	38(38)
14	Have you ever sought professional help for academic stress (e.g. therapist, counselor)?	42(42)	58(58)

Result in table no 2 portrayed distributions of the respondents on the basis of their academic stress. Result describe that most of the respondents agreed that stress affect sleep patterns and lead to insomnia. 86% of the respondent faced physical health problems because of the academic stress, 85 percent of the respondents agreed that they felt their academic performance has been affected by stress, 84 person accepted chronic stress affected memory and cognitive function.

Where more than half (58%) of the respondents disagreed on that they ever sought professional help for academic stress followed by 38 percent of the respondents who never took professional help for resolving academic stress, 25 percent of the respondents disagreed that academic stress can lead to feelings of anxiety, depression, low self esteem and they could not seek help when they felt overwhelmed by academic stress.

Table 3: Distribution of the respondent on the basis of their mental well-being

S. No.	Statement	None of the time	Rarely	Some of the time	Often	All of the time
		F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)
1	I have been feeling optimistic about the future	2(2)	9(9)	45(45)	25(25)	19(19)
2	I've been feeling useful	3(3)	5(5)	11(11)	24(24)	57(57)
3	I've been feeling relaxed	0(0)	20(20)	30(30)	30(30)	20(20)
4	I've been feeling interested in other people	9(9)	31(31)	48(48)	8(8)	4(4)
5	I had energy to spare	22(22)	28(28)	30(30)	15(15)	5(5)
6	I've been dealing with problem well	6(6)	17(17)	33(33)	26(26)	18(18)
7	I've been thinking clearly	4(4)	12(12)	30(30)	32(32)	22(22)
8	I've been feeling good about myself.	3(3)	18(18)	29(29)	30(30)	20(20)
9	I've been feeling close to other people	6(6)	19(19)	35(35)	22(22)	18(18)
10	I've been feeling confident	2(2)	12(12)	21(21)	43(43)	22(22)
11	I've been able to make up my own mind about things	6(6)	30(30)	20(20)	25(25)	19(19)
12	I've been feeling loved	11(11)	15(15)	35(35)	30(30)	9(9)
13	I've been interested in new things	14(14)	21(21)	34(34)	18(18)	13(13)
14	I've been feeling cheerful	8(8)	12(12)	22(22)	34(34)	24(24)

The result revealed that a diverse picture of the emotional and mental health of its participants. Most respondents expressed a sense of optimism and usefulness toward the future; 45% said they felt this way occasionally and 57% said they felt this way constantly. Conversely, people's perceptions of their level of relaxation varied significantly; 30% reported feeling at ease both occasionally and frequently. There was a significant level of social engagement; 48% of respondents said they were occasionally interested in other people, whereas less reported feeling regularly connected to other people. The respondents' levels of energy varied greatly: 22% felt they had little time to spare, while only 5% felt they were always energized. Thought clarity and confidence were positively biased, with 43% of respondents reporting frequent confidence and 32%. Thought clarity and confidence were favorably skewed, with 43% of respondents thinking clearly frequently and 32% feeling confident frequently. Though

the distribution was wider, 34% of respondents reported feeling cheerful frequently and 30% reported feeling loved frequently. Overall, the data shows that respondents had a generally optimistic view, which is somewhat offset by variation in particular emotional and mental states.

Co-relation between mental well-being and academic stress

Nith the perusal of the data in all the tables a relationship between the mental well-being and academic stress would be established. The mental well-being were significantly co-related at the value of 0.093, 0.05level of significance. The research was found at par with findings of study conducted by Deb, S., Strodl, E., & Sun, H. (2015) ^[12].

Major finding /Summary

The demographic profile of the respondents primarily comprises young, unmarried, educated individuals from

rural and urban backgrounds with Hinduism as the predominant religion.

The data unequivocally demonstrates the pervasive and detrimental effects of academic stress on students. A vast majority of respondents reported experiencing anxiety, depression, and physical health issues due to academic pressure. Moreover, the data revealed a significant negative impact on academic performance, indicating a cyclical relationship between stress and academic outcomes. While many students seek support, the findings highlighted a gap in the availability and effectiveness of school-based resources to address this crisis.

Analysis of the data indicated a generally neutral emotional state among respondents. While the majority of responses clustered around "some of the time" for most emotional indicators, suggesting a balanced perspective, there were notable exceptions. Feelings of confidence were reported more frequently as "often," implying a positive self-perception. Conversely, the ability to make up one's mind was indicated as "rarely" by a significant portion of participants, suggesting potential uncertainty or indecision. These findings suggest a complex emotional landscape with areas of strength and potential challenges.

Increase in academic stress lead to insomnia amongst the respondents and this lack of relaxing sleep further added on to the lowness of mental well-being. Inversely proposing relationship between academic stress lead to decrease in level of mental well-being.

Conclusion

In summary, there is a substantial and complex effect that academic stress has on students' mental health. As we've seen throughout this investigation, a variety of pressures associated with competitiveness, performance standards and the rigorous character of higher education are the root causes of academic stress. Students may experience negative effects from this stress that compromise their mental, emotional and physical well-being. According to the reviewed literature, students who experienced academic stress for an extended period of time were more likely to have anxiety, depression and other mental health issues. These circumstances impair students' general well-being and quality of life in addition to their academic achievement. Nevertheless, the study also highlighted students' resiliency and the efficacy of specific coping mechanisms and support networks in the face of these difficulties. It has been discovered that techniques including time management, reaching out for social support, mindfulness training, and physical activity might help lessen the harmful consequences of academic stress. In the future, academic institutions, legislators, and mental health specialists must all understand how important it is to handle academic stress as a vital aspect of student wellbeing. Students' mental health can be significantly protected by putting preventive measures like counseling services, stress management programs, and encouraging a positive learning environment in the classroom into practice.

In the end, we can establish a more positive and healthy learning environment where students can succeed both academically and personally by promoting a culture that values mental health in addition to academic success.

Disclaimer (Artificial intelligence)

Author(s) hereby declare that generative AI technology such as ChatGPT has been used during writing or editing of manuscripts.

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