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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### ACADEMIC STRESS AND DEPRESSION AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

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#### ABSTRACT

Academic stress and depressions are the burning causes of suicide and suicidal attempt for college students. There are lots of cases reporting by media about the college students' suicide in daily newspapers that make too much pressure and stress on parents, society, institutions and maybe also in government. Keeping in this view it is today's need to investigate the causal factors that affecting psychologically on students mentality which can help us to understand that what kind of thoughts running inside the mind of students, because of this, the present study is designed to study the academic stress and depression among college students. 360 participants (180 male, 180 female) age ranged 17 – 21 years were administered to study. Students were asked to solve Academic Stress Scale for College Students (ASSCS) and Depression Scale (MDS). The data were analyzed by using descriptive statistics, student 't' test and Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. Results revealed that there is a significant gender difference between academic stress and depression among college students. There is a significant positive relation between academic stress and depression among college students. The level of academic stress is significantly affected by student's depression. Findings from present study help to recover the students suffering from academic stress and depression.

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#### INTRODUCTION

Academic stress and depression are the topic of interest for today's society as well as for academic circle. This world is full with passion achievement and challenging for students but it is very bad to say that it is also period of stress for these students, in terms of adapting with new educational and social environment college is stressful location for college students. There are nationwide increases in college students stress (Sax, 1997). It is also product of mental distress which produces frustration and associated with academic failure and academic anxiety (Gupta and Khan, 1987). College Students faces so many academic burdens, such as, continuous examination, answering questions in the class, showing progress in school subjects due to academic stress, meanwhile understanding teaching, competition with classmates, fulfilling teachers and parental academic expectations these also the effect of academic stress consequently these demands may led to much academic pressure among students. So in terms of these "Academic stress is defined as a mental and emotional pressure or tension that occurs due to the demands of college life" (Rachel, 2008).

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The first year of college experienced stressful by students that led to depressiveness among students during academic journey. According to Adams et. al. (2008) depression is the prevalent disorder in centers of college counseling. Various stressful events are related with the depressive symptoms across the complete academic period especially new challenges and stressors from academic life, family and social domains, increases general feelings of depression among students. Badly the incidence of depressive symptoms has been increasing vastly among college students day by day and affecting on their ability of completing academic requirements and demands. American College Health Association (2009) reported that 43% of college students reported high feelings of depressed symptoms which can make difficulty for them to study, these depressive symptoms affect negatively on college students and produces greater sum of emotional suffering that effect on academic performance and also cause to negative thoughts among them. In terms of this present study will help to study the nature of academic stress and depression of college students.

#### Objectives

- To find out the gender difference in academic stress among college students.

- To find out the gender difference in depression among college students.
- To study the relationship between academic stress and depression among college students.
- To study the effect of level of academic stress on depression among college students.

### Hypotheses

- Academic stress will significantly differ on the basis of gender.
- Depression will significantly differ on the basis of gender.
- Academic stress and depression will significantly and positively relate to each other.
- The level of academic stress will significantly affect depression.

## METHODS

### Sample

360 participants consisted (180 male, 180 female) from the three different colleges of Kolhapur district age ranged from 17 to 21 years has been selected for the study. The participants covered lower middle to high socioeconomic status from a different race, without having any psychological problems. All the participants were selected on the basis of non-random purposive sampling basis.

### Tools

**Academic Stress Scale for College Students (ASSCS):** This scale was developed by Kamble, (2014) for college and university students. It measures the level of academic stress experienced by students in the whole academic year due to various sources viz. personal inadequacy, interactions with peers and teachers, fear of examination, inadequate facilities at the college, parents' expectations and socioeconomic status. The scale consists of 66 multiple choice items, like five-point Likert-type scale with response options ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. A high score on scale denotes extremely high academic stress while low score shows very low academic stress. Reliability was measured through test-retest and split half reliability method which is 0.73 and 0.88 respectively, on the other hand, the test is valid against Bist Battery of Stress Scale and Mental Health Scale 0.86 and -0.71. The test is useful for assessing academic stress of college students.

**Depression Scale (MDS):** Present scale consists 50 items with 'Yes' and 'No' options, was constructed to measure depression level of college students age ranged 12 to 45 years, developed by Dubey (1993). Reliability of depression scale is found quite high. Reliability has been calculated by test-retest and split-half method. The obtained coefficients of correlation score are 0.64 and 0.69 respectively. The validity was found 0.41 and 0.39 by rating scale by teachers and parents respectively. In scoring one score allot to 'Yes' option and zero for 'No' option obtained a total score in scale shows a total level of depression. For the interpretation of row score Mean and SD and Standard score, values have been provided as the norms for male and females. According to row score classification of the level of depression is provided viz., very high to very low depression level independently for male and female.

A high score on the scale shows a higher level of depression and the lower score shows a lower level of depression. Finally, the scale has been used for research.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Initially, descriptive statistics, independent sample 't' test and Pearson product moment correlation coefficient are used for analysis. The gender difference was assessed by using 't' test and correlation were measured by using Pearson correlation method to explore the relation between key variables like academic stress and depression. Table 1 showing the descriptive analysis of major variables of the study. The mean and standard deviation values for academic stress are 184.00 and 26.81 respectively ( $M = 184.00$ ;  $SD = 26.81$ ). Also the mean and standard deviation value for depression is respectively 13.59 and 4.10 ( $M = 13.59$ ;  $SD = 4.10$ ). The skewness and kurtosis values are also close to one, the minimum and maximum values are also obtained for both variables which showing that the collected data is distributed according to the normal distribution in terms the parametric tests are used for statistical analysis.

Table 2 showing the gender difference on academic stress and its sources. Results revealed that the mean score of male on Personal Inadequacy is 40.15 ( $SD = 7.97$ ), mean score of the female is 45.62 ( $SD=10.86$ ) and obtained 't' value is 5.44 which found significant ( $p>0.01$ ). It means the personal inadequacy among females is more than male. As per same for all remaining sources of academic stress females are found high which showing that females less interact with peers and teachers (Mean, 52.12), have more fear of examination (Mean, 32.97), experience inadequate facilities at colleges (Mean, 30.24), and experience that their parents expect more expectations from them (Mean, 34.68). The mean of total academic stress for a male is 173.08 ( $SD, 13.62$ ) and for a female is 194.92 ( $SD, 31.88$ ), the obtained 't' value is 8.44 which is significant ( $p>0.01$ ), it reveals females are also high on total academic stress. Present results are partially consistent with some previous studies. Kamble (2016) found that the total stress is higher in male students. Dhull and Kumari found that females are more academically stressed than males (Dhull Indira and Sunita Kumari, 2015), but Prabu (2015) and Khan, et. al. (2015) found male students academic stress was high than female students. One reason should for the variations in these results that the variations between the research samples of the studies, Prabu (2015) and Khan (2015) used higher education students as research sample. So the hypothesis no 1 is partially accepted here. In this study female students are found high on the total and all sources of academic stress which need to psychological innervations for female students. Table 3 showing the gender difference in depression among college students. Results revealed that the mean score of female on depression is 11.45 ( $SD, 3.50$ ), mean score of the male is 5.74 ( $SD, 3.49$ ) and obtained 't' value is 11.62 which found significant ( $p>0.01$ ). It means depression among females is more than male. These results are also consistent with prior studies done on this. Females are found more depressed than males (Ghaedi and Mohd Kosnin, 2014). Sharma and Kirmani (2015) obtained that girls reported more symptoms of depression and anxiety than boys. It clearly depicts that the hypothesis no.2 is fully accepted and supported by previous studies. Females in this study are found more depressed as compared to male. However, these results are not consistent with the study conducted by Minchekar and Bhosale (2017).

**Table 1. Descriptive Statistics**

Title	Academic Stress	Depression
Mean	184.00	13.59
Median	183.50	14.00
Mode	189.00	14.00
Standard Deviation (SD)	26.81	4.10
Skewness	.420	.244
Kurtosis	.515	-.809
Minimum	100.00	7.00
Maximum	283.00	24.00
N	360	

**Table 2. Showing gender difference on Academic Stress**

Sources of academic stress	Sex	N	Mean	SD	df	't'
Personal Inadequacy	Male	180	40.15	7.97	358	5.44*
	Female	180	45.62	10.86		
Interaction with peers and teachers	Male	180	46.14	6.69	358	6.73*
	Female	180	52.12	9.86		
Fear of Exam	Male	180	28.46	5.73	358	6.43*
	Female	180	32.97	7.44		
Inadequate Facility at college	Male	180	27.42	5.51	358	4.59*
	Female	180	30.24	6.11		
Parental Expectation &SES	Male	180	31.05	7.00	358	4.46*
	Female	180	34.68	8.36		
Total Academic Stress	Male	180	173.08	13.62	358	8.44*
	Female	180	194.92	31.88		

\*Significant at 0.05 level.

**Table 3. Showing gender difference on Depression**

Variable	Sex	N	Mean	SD	df	't'
Depression	Male	180	5.74	3.49	358	11.62*
	Female	180	11.45	3.50		

\*Significant at 0.05 level.

**Table 4. Showing Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient between Academic Stress and Depression**

Variables	Depression
Academic Stress	
Personal Inadequacy	0.66*
Interaction with peers and teachers	0.74*
Fear of Exam	0.65*
Inadequate Facility at college	0.58*
Parental Expectation &SES	0.57*
Total Academic Stress	0.87*

\*Significant at 0.05 level.

**Table 6. Showing the Scheffe's Post-Hoc Test for significant difference in the depression of college students according to their level of academic stress**

Level of Academic Stress	Level of Academic Stress		Mean Difference	Significance
	Low Academic Stress	Average Academic Stress		
7.4930	12.0982	25.6226	4.60526*	.000
7.4930	12.0982	25.6226	18.12968*	.000
			13.52443*	.000

\*Significant at 0.05 level

They found nil difference in depression between male and female college students. Present table no.4 showing the correlational analysis between academic stress and depression among college students. It is seen that there is a positive correlation between personal inadequacy and depression ( $r$ , 0.66) which is showing that the increased personal inadequacy among students shows more depression among students. With this interaction with peers and teachers, fear of exam, the inadequate facility at college and parental expectation & SES are also positively correlated with depression among college students.

It's explained that having less interaction with peers and teachers more fear about the examination, experiencing inadequate facilities at colleges, the unrealistic parental expectation from their students are led to depressiveness among them. Table 5 shows that the obtained F-value is 226.249 which is higher than the table value 4.63 with  $df$  (2,315) required for significance at 0.01 level ( $P < 0.01$ ) indicating that there is a sign at 0.01 level. It concludes that there is a significant difference in the depression of college students according to their level of academic stress. Table 6 shows that the mean score of student's depression according to

their high, average and low level of academic stress is respectively 25.62 and 12.09 and 7.49. The difference between a group of high academic stress and average academic stress is 13.52 which are significant at 0.05 level. Also, the difference between a high and low group, and average group and the low group is also 18.12 and 4.60 respectively which is also significant at 0.05 level of significance. It means that then all groups are different about depression according to their level of academic stress. High academic stress students show a high level of depression as compare to average and lower group. The average group also show the high depression as compare to lower group of students about academic stress. So it is seen that the level of depression among the students is significantly affected their depression. So the hypothesis no 4 "The level of academic stress will significantly affect depression" is supported by results of this study and accepted here. The findings of the study had reveal significant gender difference and association between academic stress and depression for college students. Focusing on some previous cases happened in various academic setups, there is some circumstantial evidence that can be prove the need and importance of the findings of present study for today's generation and professionals. Focusing state-wise data, according to National Crime Record Bureau, from 2011 to 2015 Maharashtra had highest rate of students suicide (1230, 14%) than other cities. Tanya Rana, 19 year old female medical school student who had enrolled with a coaching institute in Kota, may be the first victim of suicide in the beginning of 2017. She hung herself on 4<sup>th</sup> week of January, 2017 in Kota Rajasthan. Arjun Bharadwaj a 24 year old management student committed suicide on April, 2017 in Mumbai. According to media report he had been depressed about failure in exams and repeatedly talked about ending his life on social media (India Spend, 2017). A 19 year old IIT aspirant Arijeet Pramanick, studying in Kota, April 28<sup>th</sup> 2017 hanged herself after failing qualify for the JEE (Advanced) exam. There is no suicide note but her friends statement given to police reported that he was depressed due to failing qualifier (Hindustan times, 2017).

Most of students enrolled in coaching institutes are suffering from suicide problem due to study related stress and burden of family expectations (Hindustan Times, 2017). In past six years, more than 60 students have committed suicide due to failure to clear the exams. In Mumbai (June 2017) an 18 year old HSC student Dipti More committed suicide with behind suicide note after failing in four subjects (The Indian Express, 2017; The Asian Age, 2017). The list of cases is to large but these some representative cases predicts that today students are suffering from severe psychological problems among those academic stress and depression is the leading causal factors that led to suicide among students from higher secondary to postgraduate courses. Finding results of this study statistically proved that these factors are strongly affecting and related to students' life. Hence it is very important to focus on these factors that can help parents, teachers, institutions, society, media and government to get different solution to these problems through these results for prevention of these problems and it will help us to produce mentally healthy students those can use their knowledge for society without any pressure and also can complete their and their parent's desires properly. Findings from this study will help counselors, school counselor's educationist and also professionals working in clinical setup to prevent the sources of academic stress and causes of depression.

These results also can help to organize separate training programs for this kind of students for effective mental health.

## Conclusion

- The significant gender difference is found on academic stress among college students. Female college students are found more academically stressed than male college students.
- The significant gender difference is found in depression among college students. Also, female college students are more depressed than male college students.
- Academic stress and depression are found significantly and positively correlated with each other among college students. Increased level of academic stress increases the level of depression among students.
- The level of academic stress has significantly affected on depression among college students. The difference found in depression according to their level of academic stress.

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