

Academic Stress among College Students: A Gender-Based Comparative Study

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ABSTRACT: One of the problems that receive a lot of attention these days is stress. It may have an impact on people's physical and mental well-being even though it doesn't create health issues. The goal of this qualitative comparative analysis was to present a comprehensive picture of academic stress among college students based on their. Because of the challenges they encounter in college, students frequently feel pressure to perform well academically. The purpose of this quantitative study is to assess the pupils' degree of academic stress. The study involved 40 students (20 boys and 20 girls) chosen by random sampling and used a quantitative descriptive design with survey methods to collect data. Academic Stress Scale was used to measure stress levels. The T-test was used to make the distinction between gender-focused analyses of psychological characteristics among college students. The findings suggested that boys were more stressful about academics than girls. Based on the findings with associated implications, the researcher advises additional research of psychological factors among college students.

Keywords: Stress, Academic Stress, gender comparison, college students.

I. INTRODUCTION:

In the seventeenth century, the word "stress," which comes from the Latin word "stringeres", which means to draw tight, was used to characterize suffering and adversity. Agolla (2009) claims that stress has grown in importance in academic circles. After doing in-depth research on stress and its effects, numerous behavioral scientists came to the conclusion that the subject required further attention.

Krishnan Lal (2013) asserts that students today must put up more effort due to the new educational obstacles they face. Additionally, society places a lot of pressure on kids to fulfil a variety of responsibilities, many of which are unclear, inconsistent, and impossible in the current

sociocultural, economic, and bureaucratic circumstances of our society.

The transitional era, which lies between childhood and adulthood, is experienced by students in their teens. Stress is said to be brought on by a variety of issues, including issues at school, in college, with money, with family, and in their immediate environment.

Stress is any circumstance that makes someone feel and think negatively, (Menaga, S., and Chandrasekaran, V., 2013). Stress is regarded as a detrimental emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and physiological process that occurs when people cope with or adapt to stresses (Bernstein et al., 2012). According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), stress is a physical or psychological phenomenon that occurs when a person interacts with their surroundings and is brought on by their cognitive evaluation of stimuli. In particular, academic stress refers to the worry or mental discomfort that students encounter during the learning process as a result of worries or ideas about failing academically (Lal, 2014). Tension in the body or mind is called stress. Anger, frustration, and anxiety are just a few of the bad emotions that can result from a wide range of accidents in a person's life.

Academic stress can have detrimental emotional effects like anxiety, burnout, depression, and a decline in academic motivation, according to Pascoe et al. (2020). Additionally, the stress reaction can show up behaviourally (such as procrastination, retreat, or academic disengagement) or physiologically (such as headaches, exhaustion, or sleep difficulties). Academic stress is a common occurrence for university students as part of their education, but when it persists or becomes excessive, it can affect academic performance, focus, and cognitive function (Putwain, 2007).

Sailo and Varghese (2024) Stress is how the body reacts to pressure or danger. It is also

regarded as a detrimental behavioral and physiological process that occurs when a person attempts to adjust or make concessions in response to stressors. Stressors are situations that interfere with or threaten to interfere with a person's day-to-day activities and force them to adapt. Stress is a natural component of daily living, yet it is not always viewed negatively because it helps people accomplish their goals in life. Students will inevitably experience stress in the classroom, which affects their performance in all academic pursuits. Numerous students reported experiencing significant levels of academic stress at predictable periods as a result of studying for and taking tests, competing in class rankings, and learning a vast amount of material in a relatively short length of time. A significant factor in influencing students' mental health is academic stress (Sailo and Varghese, 2024).

According to Rosenham and Seligman (1989) and Selye (1974), stress is commonly understood to be the body's generic reaction to demands placed on it or to upsetting occurrences in the environment. Stress is a mechanism by which we recognize and manage environmental risks and difficulties (Myers, D.G., 2005). Stressors are both external and internal variables that lead to stress (Lazarus, 1990).

Academic stress: According to Aina and Wijayati (2019), one type of stress that occurs in academic settings like schools and colleges is academic stress. Based on the aforementioned chronicle facts, the research subjects' stressors are strongly associated with the academic environment, leading to the assumption that the stress is academic in nature. Additionally, academic stress is defined by Olejnik and Holschuh (2007) as a reaction to the quantity of work that students must complete. Students experience stress as a result of the large number of assignments. Additionally, according to Alvin (2007) and Gusniarti (2002), academic stress is a condition that arises from students' pressures to deal with difficult academic situations. It causes students to perceive themselves as incapable of managing both the demands of their surroundings and their own resources. According to McKean et al. (2000), stressors by themselves do not cause tension, anxiety, or depression. Rather, stress is caused by the interplay between stressors and an individual's perception and response to these stresses. Environmental stress arises when an individual perceives environmental stimuli or demands that surpass their capacity to manage them (Shirom, 1986). Researchers have long studied academic stress in students, and they have

found that stressors include an excessive number of assignments, peer competition, failures, a lack of pocket money, poor relationships with lecturers or other students, family issues, and troubles at home. Stressors at the institutional (university) level include crammed lecture halls, the semester system, and insufficient resources for academic work (Marwan Zaid Bataineh, 2013). Additionally, college students face a distinct set of stressful situations or stressors. There are a number of reasons why college students' stress levels are higher, according to Ross, Neibling, and Heckert (1999), students must first adapt significantly to college life. Second, interpersonal interactions are strained due to the demands of academics. Third, college students' stress levels are influenced by housing arrangements and lifestyle modifications. Additionally, academic demands, support networks, and inadequate coping mechanisms cause stress for college students. Although these factors have been linked to stress, it is important to remember that in order to reduce stress among students, university administrators must create strategies that will allow them to anticipate the signs and causes of stress. Academic stress, according to Bedew and Gabriel (2015), is "the body's response to academic-related demands that are perceived as exceeding available resources." From a psychological standpoint, academic stress results from both internal and external pressures, such as self-expectations and fear of failing, as well as external stressors, such as competition, workload, and evaluation.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Mohamed, A. N. et al. (2025) the strain of undergoing clinical training. The results show that whereas over half of male nursing students reported low to moderate levels of stress, a significant portion of female nursing students reported moderate to high levels. According to Khesht-Masjedi et al. (2019), girls are more likely than boys to experience higher levels of anxiety, despair, and uneasiness, which can have varied effects on their academic performance. Girls may still do better academically, though, possibly as a result of more robust coping strategies or cultural expectations.

Furthermore, a statistically significant difference in the level of stress experienced during clinical placements was found between male and female nursing students. This conclusion is in line with the study's findings, which showed that women's and men's perceived stress levels differ

dramatically, with women reporting much greater levels of overall felt stress. Additionally, compared to their male counterparts, more females reported moderate levels of stress. Male and female nurses have different areas of job stress, and male nurses have reported higher levels of job stress than female nurses (Lee and Cho, 2016).

In terms of occupational stress, this difference was quite small among individuals with less than four years of work experience. However, among those with more than five years of work experience, gender disparities were noticeable in several areas pertaining to workplace stress and stress coping strategies. Male students are considerably more stressed than female students, according to Khan et al. (2015). According to the study, schoolboys are more susceptible to stress-related academic and psychological difficulties in the school setting than schoolgirls because they experience higher levels of academic pressure, performance expectations, and competitive stress. According to Bartwal and Raj (2014), there is no discernible gender difference in the levels of academic stress experienced by male and female students. Their results also imply that pupils who possess greater social intelligence are better equipped to handle the demands of their studies. Strong social intelligence has a critical role in lowering and managing academic stress by enabling people to ask for help, communicate effectively, and adjust to academic obstacles. According to MacLean et al. (2013), compared to boys, girls regularly report higher levels of perceived stress and more health issues associated to stress. Crucially, adolescence—a crucial developmental stage characterized by biological, psychological, and social changes—is when this gender difference first manifests. Teenage girls are typically more vulnerable to emotional, social, and academic pressures, such as expectations for relationships and performance. The necessity for early detection and gender-responsive stress management strategies in schools is highlighted by the possibility that these elevated stress levels may increase susceptibility to anxiety, depression, and psychosomatic problems.

Timothy et al. (2011) quoted Compas & Wagner (1991). Stressful life events had a greater impact on women's reports of depressive symptoms; in other words, women appear to be more sensitive than boys to external stressors, at least when it comes to internalizing symptoms like stress, melancholy, worry, etc. Khaksari, M. et al. (2003) based on the findings we may draw the conclusion that males and girls have different physiological reactions to exam stress, with males exhibiting a higher rise in cortisol and systolic and diastolic blood pressure. Therefore, we recommend that when a test is stressful, various impacts of stress should be taken into account for male and female students. Even for female students, stress is thought to affect the luteal phase differently from the follicular phase.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The study used a descriptive method and was quantitative in character. Slevitch (2011) defines quantitative research as a methodical investigation of any phenomenon through the collection of numerical data and the application of statistical, computer, and mathematical techniques. In order to determine the gender-oriented examination of psychological aspects at the college level, the groups were compared using descriptive statistics such as mean and inferential statistics such as t-test.

Objective:

- (1) To compare academic stress levels among male and female college students.
- (2) To ascertain the analysis of academic stress and other psychological factors among college students according to gender.

Hypothesis:

H01: There will be no significant difference of academic stress regarding gender at college level students.

Sample: The study population included both men and women college students. There were twenty boys and twenty girl pupils out of a total of forty students.

Table of Sample:

Groups	Frequency	Percentage
Group (a) Male	20	50%
Group (b) Female	20	50%
Total Sample	40	100%

Tool: A standardized psychological test called the Academic stress Scale given by Rajendran, R., & Kaliappan, K. V. (1991) is used to assess students' stress levels. It assesses students' cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and physiological responses to stress in addition to academic, interpersonal, environmental, and personal pressures. The scale is helpful for research, counselling, and creating stress-management interventions in educational contexts since it assists in identifying the main causes of stress and coping mechanisms.

Need and significance of the study: In today's highly competitive world, students face a range of academic challenges, including exam anxiety, disinterest in attending lectures, and trouble comprehending the subject matter. Academic stress is defined as worry or fear over one's performance on academic assignments. It can discourage students from trying their hardest on exams. Numerous factors at school, including popularity in extracurricular activities, demands from parents,

the need for flawless performance, anxiety about academics, and a heavy course load, can cause academic pressure. Psychological illnesses, panic attacks, fatigue, and melancholy are common among younger students. Students were viewed as the future stars or builders who would take on the duties required to advance the country more effectively. In order to determine this, the researcher decided to look at college-bound students' stress levels (Prabu, S. P. 2015).

Procedure: Participants were given a thorough explanation of the study's objectives. Academic stress Scale given by Rajendran, R., & Kaliappan, K. V. (1991) was used for collection of data, students were given all necessary instructions, handed questionnaires, and assured that their data would be kept private. The participants were asked to answer honestly and to try every item. Following the gathering of data, response sheets were scored appropriately, and data analysis was then carried out to find out results with the help of SPSS.

IV. RESULT AND ANALYSIS:

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Psychological Factor:

Variables	Sub-variables	No. Of Items	Mean	Overall Mean
	Acute Stress	5	2.762	
Stress	Episodic Stress level	5	2.944	2/894
	Chronic Stress Level	5	2.978	

The overall mean for depression in Table 1 is 3.005, indicating that the participants have moderate levels of depressive symptoms, Kausar, S., Ishaq, M., & Kausar, S. (2023). The highest score for interpersonal activity indicates a comparatively higher level of engagement in interpersonal interactions despite melancholy sentiments. Perceived control had the highest score, indicating that individuals had a moderate level of control over their worried thoughts and emotions. The overall mean for anxiety is 2.991, indicating moderate anxiety levels. A moderate amount of stress is indicated by the overall stress mean of 2.894, with chronic stress having the highest score, which may indicate persistent, long-term stress in

the individuals' life. The mean values for all three variables—Depression, Anxiety, and Stress—indicate moderate levels of these psychological characteristics. This implies that people tend to maintain interpersonal relationships and feel somewhat in control of their anxiety, despite experiencing moderate levels of sadness/depression, worry/anxiety, and tension/stress. However, chronic stress, which denotes extended stress exposure, could be a cause for concern. This analysis is focused on gender, and additional gender-based comparison or breakdown could highlight particular patterns and variations in how these psychological characteristics appear in different genders.

Table 2: T-test Statistics for the Psychological Factors:

Gender	Mean	Df	T	Sig
Male	154.65			
Female	143.20	38	2.032	0.049

The mean scores for psychological aspects for the male and female groups are compared in

Table 2. The mean score of 154.65 is greater for men than for women (143.20). There are 38

degrees of freedom (df) for both groups. To determine whether the difference in psychological characteristics between genders is statistically significant, a "t-test" was performed. The results showed a t-value of 2.032 with a significance level

(p-value) of 0.049. The "p-value is less than 0.05" indicates that there is a "statistically significant difference" between the mean psychological factor scores of males and girls.

Table 3: T-Statistics for Mean Score of Depression among Gender:

Gender	Mean	Df	T	Sig
Male	62.55			
Female	58.60	38	1.877	0.068

The mean scores for the categories of boys and men and girls and women are contrasted in Table 3. The "mean score" for girls is 58.60, compared to 62.55 for boys. This test has 38 degrees of freedom (df). A significance level (p-value) of 0.068 and a "t-value" of 1.877 were

obtained from a t-test. The "difference in mean scores between boys and girls" for psychological characteristics related to depression is not statistically significant because the "p-value is greater than 0.05."

Table 4: T-Statistics for Mean Score of Anxiety among Gender:

Gender	Mean	Df	T	Sig
Male	46.05			
Female	43.5.	38	1.119	0.270

The "mean scores" for the groups of boys and girls are compared in Table 4. The average score for boys and men is 46.05, but the average score for girls and women is 43.50. The t-test produced a t-value of 1.119 with a significance level (p-value) of 0.270 and 38 degrees of freedom

(df). There is no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of males and females for psychological aspects related to anxiety because the p value is greater than 0.05, suggesting that the "observed difference is likely due to random variation rather than a meaningful effect."

Table 5: T-Statistics for Mean Score of Stress among Gender:

Gender	Mean	Df	T	Sig
Male	46.05			
Female	41.10	38	2.336	0.025

The mean scores of the males and females groups are compared in Table 5, with the boys/male group having a mean score of 46.05 and the girls/female group having a lower mean score of 41.10. There are 38 degrees of freedom (df). The results of the t-test were a significance level "(p value)" of 0.025 and a "t-value" of 2.336. This finding is "statistically significant," suggesting that there is a significant difference between the mean scores of males and females for psychological aspects related to stress because the p-value is less than 0.05.

academic pressure. Ali, K. et al, (2025), due to the demands of multitasking and a lack of coping mechanisms, men may also be under more stress, which can have a negative impact on their academic performance and psychological health. Male students are more stressed than female students, according to Khan et al. (2015). This discrepancy may be related to increased social expectations and parental pressure. Male students are expected to succeed academically, find steady work, and provide for their families in various cultural contexts, which raise performance-related stress. Males may be less inclined to ask for assistance or communicate their stress due to social norms that prioritize independence, competitiveness, and emotional control. Male students' mental health and general academic adjustment may suffer as a result of the combined demands of school, family, and society. The results

V. DISCUSSION:

The current findings show that the male group experienced more stress than the female group. This result could be explained by the fact that men are subjected to more social and familial expectations, more emotional sensitivity, and more

presented by Iskandar et al. (2024) showed that female students had far greater levels of academic stress than male students, showing significant gender-based disparities in stress responses, which goes contradictory to the current study.

This result is consistent with a University at Buffalo study (quoted in Hafifah et al., 2017) that found female students outperformed male students in academic contexts in terms of stress regulation, emotional control, and adaptive coping methods. The present study matches with the similar findings of (Rehman & Shah, 2023) There was a statistically significant difference in the stress levels of male and female students, despite the fact that male students were slightly overpowering in the sample than female students.

According to the investigation, there are significant gender differences, with men scoring higher than women on certain psychological characteristics. This is in line with research such as that conducted by Fawzy and Hamed (2017), which identified a high correlation between stress and depression and suggests that gender inequalities in psychological experiences are more common among college and university level students. The result aligned by the study given; Othman, Ahmad, El-Morr, and Ritvo, (2019) indicates the contextual factors involved behind the psychological factors and found the severe level of tension/stress among male as compared to female which also aligns the finding of the study.

VI. CONCLUSION:

Based on the results mentioned above and discussion, it can be said that my current study found that male students experienced higher levels of stress than female students. Gender, socioeconomic level, academic pressure, overload, lack of leisure time, lack of independence, and increased societal expectations or subpar exam results were all found to have an impact. The current research study found a strong correlation between gender differences in stress and academic achievement and college work. The overall results of the study suggest that stress varies by gender. According to our research, men's attitudes, anticipated hopes, and poor coping mechanisms related to college success—such as a focus on achievement, grades, hard work, and future concerns—may be responsible for their higher stress levels.

Limitations: (1) The results may not be applicable to all students because the survey only included college students from a few colleges in India

(2) The sample size was small and may not accurately reflect the large student population.

(3) Mainly academic stress was investigated, and other essential aspects such as assistance networks and personality qualities were not examined.

Suggestions: (1) Future research should include students from other colleges or areas to have a more comprehensive perspective.

(2) A greater sample size may boost statistical power, minimize bias, increase dependability, and improve the overall accuracy and generalizability of the findings.

(3) Future studies should include other factors like social support, study habits, or emotional health.

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Conflict of interest: There is no conflict of interest regarding this piece of research, writing, and/or publication.

Informed Consent: Students gave their written informed consent to take part in the study. Participants were made aware of the study's voluntary nature and the anonymity of their answers.

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