

Academic Stress and Psychological Well-Being among College Students

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ABSTRACT

The study attempts to examine the academic stress and psychological well-being among college students, and the purpose of the study is to find out how academic stress and psychological well-being differ with gender. It also focuses on understanding the relationship between academic stress and psychological well-being among college students. A total of 80 college students (40 females and 40 males) from various parts of Kerala participated in the study. The participants completed the Perception of Academic Stress Scale questionnaire and the PGI General Well-being Scale that measures academic stress and psychological well-being. A comprehensive statistical analysis was done using the descriptive and inferential statistical methods in SPSS to analyse the results. Descriptive statistics included mean and standard deviation, and inferential statistics included Mann-Whitney U Test and Spearman's Correlation. The result of the study concluded that there is a significant difference between females and males on academic stress, and there is no significant difference between females and males on psychological well-being. Also, there is a significant relationship between academic stress and psychological well-being among college students.

Keywords: *Academic Stress; Psychological Well-being; College Students*

College is where the young aspirants with their young mind, ideas and feelings come together to build their passion, career, and their future. It is the place where an individual meets and gets to know various unique people, makes mistakes and also develops themselves from all the experiences. Young adults at this stage, being exposed to the highly competitive and challenging modern world, would start feeling stressful. Students are considered to be the pillars of the future society, and when they are affected by this stress, it can in turn affect their physical-mental health, and their well-being. Well-being is considered to be one of the most important goals that individuals strive for, and it is what determines our happiness and satisfaction with life. But, when the students are affected by the stress due to academic demands, it would threaten their well-being and academic performance, which is bad for their mental and physical health, and also bad for the society in the future.

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Received: May 13, 2021; Revision Received: July 12, 2021; Accepted: August 03, 2021

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Bisht outlined academic stress as a demand relate to academics that tax or exceed the offered resources (internal or external) as cognitively appraised by the coed involved. Bisht also proposed that, academic stress is the reflection of how the individual perceives their own:- (a) Academic Frustration, which is the state that is caused by the harm of some of the academic goals, (b) Academic Conflict, which occurs as the result of two or more equal but incompatible response tendencies to the academic goals, (c) Academic Pressure occurs when the student is under the heavy demands of time and energy to meet the academic goals, (d) Academic Anxiety occurs due to the apprehension of harm to some of the academic goals.

Levi (1987) outlined psychological well-being as a dynamic state characterised by reasonable amount of harmony between individuals' talents, desires and expectations, and environmental demands and opportunities. In the literature of psychology, the concept of "well-being" is used as a general mental health term, which is grouped into two, as subjective well-being and psychological well-being. Subjective well-being can be described as being happy, relaxed, and the relative absence of problems, while psychological well-being can be described as taking up of challenges, and making efforts to develop and grow personally. The purpose of life, the awareness of one's own potential and the quality of interpersonal relations are involved in psychological well-being.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Kiani, Rabia Latif, Bibi, Rashid & Tariq (2017) conducted a study to investigate the effect of academic stress on the mental health of college and university students. The data was collected using the Educational stress scale for adolescents, ESSA and Centre for Epidemiological Studies-Depression scale, CES-D from a sample of 70 students (35 males and 35 females) of the ages 15-23. The results analysed using Pearson product moment correlation showed that no notable association exists among academic stress and mental health of college and university students. Also, the results of independent sample t-test showed that females have greater level of academic stress in contrast with males, and there is no gender difference among male and female students in experiencing mental health.

Duncan-Williams, B (2015) conducted a study on academic stress, academic performance and the psychological well-being of senior high school remedial students in the greater Accra region of Ghana. The data was collected using the Student-Life Stress Inventory (SLSI), Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS- 42), the Africultural Coping Systems Inventory (ACSI), Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) and the Academic Self-Efficacy Scale from 182 SHS remedial students from two remedial schools in Accra. Analysis done using the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient indicated a positive relationship between academic stress and psychological well-being. Similarly, Academic performance was not related to psychological well-being. The analysis done using the Hierarchical Multiple Regression analyses showed that social support, africultural coping, gender, and socio-economic status did not moderate the relationship between stress and psychological well-being. Also, the analysis using the independent t-test indicated gender differences in the psychological well-being of the students.

Munir, Shafiq, Ahmad & Khan (2015) conducted a study to measure the relationship among loneliness, academic stress and psychological well-being. It was conducted among a sample of 165 college students (67 males and 98 females) of first year selected by simple cluster sampling strategy, and the respondents age range was 15-19, using four questionnaires to measure loneliness, academic stress, psychological well-being was used to collect data. Descriptive statistics, correlation, multiple stepwise regression analysis and t- test were used

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to interpret the results, and the results that there is significant correlation among loneliness, academic stress, and psychological well-being. Loneliness, academic stress and family income were identified as the predictor of psychological well-being. It was found that there is no significant differences among male and female students, and it was concluded that loneliness and academic stress were significantly negatively correlated with psychological well-being, and loneliness and academic stress were significantly positively correlated.

Glozah (2013) conducted a study on how academic stress and perceived social support, and how it influences the psychological wellbeing of Senior High School students in Ghana. The general health questionnaire, student life-stress inventory and perceived social support from family and friends' scales were used to collect data from 226 students. The results showed that perceived social support lessens the effects of academic stress on psychological wellbeing. Girls showed higher scores on perceived social support but more depression. Boys showed higher academic stress and greater psychological wellbeing, and these are attributed part to the socialisation role of gender.

METHODOLOGY

Research Questions

- Is there any significant relationship between academic stress and psychological well-being among college students?
- Is there any significant difference in academic stress among college students based on their gender?
- Is there any significant difference in psychological well-being among college students based on their gender?

Objectives

- To examine the relationship between academic stress and psychological well-being among college students.
- To examine the difference in academic stress among college students based on their gender.
- To examine the difference in psychological well-being among college students based on their gender.

Hypothesis

H₀1: There is no significant relationship between academic stress and psychological well-being among college students.

H₀2: There is no significant difference in academic stress among college students based on their gender.

H₀3: There is no significant difference in psychological well-being among college students based on their gender.

Design of the Study

The study of academic stress and psychological well-being among college students was a quantitative study. A correlational study is used to study the relationship between academic stress and psychological well-being among college students. Also, in the study, a comparison in academic stress and psychological well-being between gender is carried out.

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Sample

The sample of the study consisted of 80 college students (40 females and 40 males) selected from Kerala using purposive sampling. The subjects selected were college students of ages 18-23.

Tools used for the Study

- **Perception of Academic Stress scale:** The scale is a 5-point likert scale developed by Bedewy and Gabriel (2015). This scale consists of 18 multiple choice statements. It ranges from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree) for the first set, and from 1 (Strongly Agree) to 5 (Strongly Disagree) for the second set. The instrument has internal consistency reliability of 0.7. It was established by Cronbach's alpha method. The considerable effort to carefully develop a table of specifications with items for the present scale plus the systematic input from education experts enhanced the content and face validity of the scale. The follow-up by the experts further enhanced the content validity because of their high agreement on the relevance of the items. From the correlations between the four factors' (Factor 1, "Pressures to perform," Factor 2, "Perceptions of workload," Factor 3, "Academic Self-Perception," and Factor 4, "Time restraints") scores, there is evidence to support convergent validity for this scale. Convergent validity was demonstrated by the positive significant correlations between the three factors, especially by the significant positive correlation between the scores of Factors 1, "Pressures to perform," and the scores of the other three factors.
- **PGI General Well-being Scale:** The scale was developed by Verma and Verma (1989) and it is used to assess the psychological well-being. It is a 20-item scale organized in four domains; physical (e.g., feeling bothered by illness or pain), mood (e.g., feeling cheerful most of the time), anxiety (e.g., feeling bothered by nervousness), self/others (e.g., feeling useful/wanted) of five items each. The test-retest reliability was measured by Kuder Richardson correlation –20 formula and was found to be .98, to have satisfactory validity and highly significant reliability. Gutman's Split-half reliability coefficient on the total was 0.86 (ten items in part one = 0.76 and ten items in part two = 0.78). The scale was correlated significantly with Bradbuff scale and general satisfaction level rating.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

- There is a significant relationship between academic stress and psychological well-being among college students.
- There is a significant difference in academic stress among college students based on their gender.
- There is no significant difference in psychological well-being among college students based on their gender.

H₀1: There is no significant relationship between academic stress and psychological well-being among college students.

The data related to this objective was analyzed with the help of spearman correlation. Spearman correlation was calculated between academic stress and psychological well-being among college students.

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Table 1: Correlation between academic stress and psychological well-being among college students

Variable	N	r	p
Academic Stress Psychological Well-being	80	0.282	0.011

The Spearman correlation of academic stress and psychological well-being among college students is 0.282, and the corresponding p-value is 0.011. And it is significant at 0.05 level. Analysis of the table indicates that there is a significant positive correlation between academic stress and psychological well-being among college students, and the correlation coefficient indicates that the relationship is weak. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected and there is a statistically significant relationship between academic stress and psychological well-being among college students. Munir et al. (2015) conducted a research to measure the relationship among loneliness, academic stress and psychological well-being among a sample of 165 college students. 67 males and 98 females were part of this study. The results concluded that there is a significant correlation among loneliness, academic stress, and psychological well-being. Loneliness and academic stress were significantly negatively correlated with psychological well-being, and loneliness and academic stress were significantly positively correlated. The above study suggests that there is a significant relationship between academic stress and psychological well-being among college students. Duncan-Williams, B (2015) conducted a study on academic stress, academic performance and the psychological well-being of 182 senior high school remedial students. Analysis indicated a positive relationship between academic stress and psychological well-being. Similarly, Academic performance was not related to psychological well-being. The analysis done also showed that social support, aficultural coping, gender, and socio-economic status did not moderate the relationship between stress and psychological well-being. Also, gender differences in the psychological well-being of the students were found. Now as per the present study, there is a significant relationship between academic stress and psychological well-being among college students.

H₀2: There is no significant difference in academic stress among college students based on their gender.

The data related to this objective was analyzed with the help of Mann – Whitney U test. Mann – Whitney U test was calculated for gender difference in academic stress among college students.

Table 2: Mean, z-value and p-value of academic stress among female and male

Variable	Group	N	Mean	z	p
Academic Stress	Females	40	45.64	1.981	0.048
	Males	40	35.36		

Mean value for academic stress in females is 45.64 and in males is 35.36. The Mann-Whitney U Test was done to check if there is any significant difference between the females and males. The z-value for academic stress is 1.981 and the corresponding p-value is 0.048. According to the results, since the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected, and it indicates that there is a significant difference in academic stress among college students based on their gender. Kiani et al. (2017) conducted a study on the effect of

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academic stress on the mental health of 70 college and university students. The study concluded that there is a significant difference in academic stress among college and university students based on their gender. The above study suggests that there is gender difference in experiencing academic stress. Now as per the present study there is a significant difference in academic stress among college students based on their gender.

H₀3: There is no significant difference in psychological well-being among college students based on their gender.

The data related to this objective was analyzed with the help of Mann – Whitney U test. Mann – Whitney U test was calculated for gender difference in psychological well-being among college students.

Table 3: Mean, z-value and p-value of psychological well-being among female and male

Variable	Group	N	Mean	z	p
Psychological	Females	40	41.15		
Well-being	Males	40	39.85	0.252	0.801

Mean value for psychological well-being in females is 41.15 and in males is 39.85. The Mann-Whitney U Test was done to check if there is any significant difference between the females and males. The z-value for psychological well-being is 0.252 and the corresponding p-value is 0.801. According to the results, since the p-value is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis is accepted, that is, there is no significant difference in psychological well-being among college students based on their gender. Waghmare (2016) conducted a study to investigate the impact of gender and location of the college students on psychological well-being. The sample for the study comprised of 100 college students [50 male students (25 urban and 25 rural male students) and 50 female students (25 Urban and 25 rural female college students)] from Jalna city. The results of the study revealed that there is no significant difference between male and female between urban and rural college students on psychological well-being. The above study suggests that females and males do not differ in academic stress. Now as per the present study also there is no significant difference in psychological well-being among females and males.

DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows the correlation between academic stress and psychological well-being among college students. The Spearman correlation of academic stress and psychological well-being among college students is 0.282, and the corresponding p-value is 0.011, and it is significant at 0.05 level. The p-value is less than 0.05, and the null hypothesis is rejected, and it indicates that there is a significant positive correlation between academic stress and psychological well-being among college students, and the correlation coefficient indicates that the relationship is weak. There have been studies that revealed the association between academic stress and psychological well-being (Munir et al, 2015). Table 2 shows the mean, z-value and p-value of academic stress among females and males. Mean value for academic stress in females is 45.64 and in males is 35.36. The z-value for academic stress is 1.981 and the corresponding p-value is 0.048. The p-value is less than 0.05, and the null hypothesis is rejected, and it indicates that there is a significant difference in academic stress among college students based on their gender. The findings of the study are supported by previous research, with significant difference in academic stress among college students based on their gender (Kiani et al.,2017). Table 3 shows the mean, z-value and p-value of psychological well-being among females and males. Mean value for psychological well-

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being in females is 41.15 and in males is 39.85. The z-value for psychological well-being is 0.252 and the corresponding p-value is 0.801. The p-value is greater than 0.05, and the null hypothesis is accepted, that is, there is no significant difference in psychological well-being among college students based on their gender. The findings of the study are supported by previous research, with no significant difference in psychological well-being among college students based on their gender (Waghmare, 2016).

CONCLUSION

Since the major purpose of the study was to examine relationship between academic stress and psychological well-being among college students. Depending on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were made:

- There was a significant relationship between academic stress and psychological well-being among college students. It was observed that there is a significant positive correlation between academic stress and psychological well-being among college students, and the correlation coefficient indicates that the relationship is weak. ($r=0.282$, $p<0.05$).
- There was a significant difference in academic stress among college students based on their gender. It was noted that females had higher academic stress levels compared to males (Mean in females= 45.64, and in males= 35.36, $z= 1.981$, $p= 0.048$).
- There was no significant difference in psychological well-being among college students based on their gender (Mean in females= 41.15, and in males= 39.85, $z= 0.252$, $p= 0.801$).

Implications of the Study

- The study aims in making the students aware of the various stressors and the different coping strategies that can help them deal with the stressors in a better way, and thus maintaining their psychological well-being.
- The study is relevant to educational institutions and other organizations, as it can make them aware of the importance of improving psychological well-being and reducing academic stress.

Limitations of the Study

Purposive sampling was used for the study and the data is collected only from India, and therefore it is specific and cannot be generalized to other populations. The data included only the information from females and males of the age group of 18-23. Another setback of this study was the difficulty to examine all the elements of the variables 'academic stress' and 'psychological well-being' in a quantitative study which was conducted online, with only a few questions.

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Acknowledgement

Thanking all the participants who took part in the study, my research guide, family and my friends for their constant and unwavering support and love. Lastly thanking God for guidance.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Baiju M & Rajalakshmi V R (2021). Academic Stress and Psychological Well-Being Among College Students. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 9(3), 194-202. DIP:18.01.022.20210903, DOI:10.25215/0903.022