Research Paper

A Study on Understanding Academic Stress and Coping Strategy Amongst College Students in Shillong, Meghalaya

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ABSTRACT

In the present study, an honest attempt is made to study the academic stress, various factors of academic stress and coping strategies among the college going students in Shillong, Meghalaya. For the purpose of study, a representative sample of 199 students of different colleges in Shillong was taken. The sample consisted of 71 male students and 128 female students. To determine the academic stress level of the students, the Academic Stress Scale by Rajendran and Kaliappan (1990) was administered to college going students. The Brief-COPE Scale was administered to understand the coping strategies used by the college youths of Shillong to cope with academic stress. The survey results when integrated and interpreted considering objectives for the study showed that there is moderate level (69.3%) stress among the college going students in Shillong. An analysis of the results by the age group and academic stress of college students is found to be the age group of 21-23 which is 50.7%. In another analysis, it was found that the students pursuing BA have moderate level of stress (69.3%). Based on the findings of this study, educational institutions should take proactive steps to address the prevalent of academic stress among students.

Keywords: *Academic stress, Coping strategies, College going students*

Each year, lots of students join colleges and universities with the goal of obtaining degrees, which they hope will lead to the achievement of necessary careers and satisfied lives. Stress that can arise from various academic and environmental aspects is very common among students. Uncontrollable stress impairs academic, social, environmental, psychological, and physical adjustment (Yikealo et al, 2018). College students are constantly disadvantaged in many aspects due to academic pressure, adapting to a new environment, fear of failure, struggle to make a difference, low self-esteem, adapting to society, etc. (Pariat et. al, 2014). Each student has a different method for coping with anxiety. Studying different sources of these coping strategies is important so that it may

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facilitate future students in managing their own stress and thereby reduce the likelihood of withdrawal from school (Anders, 2011).

Academic Stress: Global Context

In a study by Barbayannis et al., 2022 of 843 students on the impact of academic stress on students' mental health, they found that the results indicated that academic stress at school college was significantly correlated with the psychological well-being of students who responded to this survey.

A quantitative study (Ramachandiran & Dhanapal, 2018) aimed at determining the perception of Generation Y and Z students (18-25 years old) to identify stress triggers and their effects. The results showed that 88% of respondents confirmed that studies are the main cause of their stress, while 78% said they face moderate levels of stress and of these, 36% BMI is in the overweight/obese group.

Academic Stress: Indian Context

Researchers such as Verma & Verma (2020) have examined mental stress in students who are enrolled in higher education at the university level, especially students who are studying technical education in India. Data from 2500 graduate students in various technical colleges and universities in North India were collected using structured questionnaires through online and offline channels. Research results show that the main factors affecting mental stress and depression in students when entering technical studies are heavy workload, lack of support from family and friends, and pressure.

A cross-sectional study like Kumar (2016) explored a study to assess depression, anxiety, and stress levels of medical students using DASS. To compare levels of depression, anxiety, and stress among medical students. The Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale was used to assess the levels of depression, anxiety, and stress among medical students. Of the 332 students participating in the study, the majority of 213 (64.1%) aged 17-20, 193 (55.0%) were female, and 215 (64.8%) were studying in their second trimester. two. The rates of depression, anxiety, and stress were 124 (37.3%), 168 (50.6%), and 109 (32.8%). Most of the students suffered from mild depression, anxiety, and stress. The prevalence of mental health problems such as depression, anxiety, and stress are more than 30% among medical students.

Academic Stress: North East Indian Context

Pale & Kharbhih (2020) conducted a study to identify the prevalence of depression in adolescents and to identify factors that cause depression in adolescents. The survey is a mixed method. For the qualitative method, researchers used in-depth interviews, and for the quantitative method, Beck's Depression Inventory BDI Questionnaire (1996). An exploratory method of qualitative in-depth interviews was to formulate and enhance quantitative results to present valid results. A total of 50 people (22 men and 28 women) participated. Findings show that three adolescents suffer from severe depression. The results show that adolescents need help in understanding the situations everyone goes through. However, awareness raising in schools, workshops, and counseling sessions with counselors can be beneficial.

A descriptive study was conducted to assess academic stress and its effects on mental health in nursing students from selected nursing schools in Assam. Data results show that many

students (64%) have moderate stress levels, 18% have severe stress levels, and 18% have mild stress levels. Most students (61.50%) are in moderate condition, 22.50% in bad condition and 16% in good mental condition. There is a very important link between academic stress and religion. The psychological health of first-year nursing students with a Bachelor of Science degree is highly dependent on age and religion. There is a highly significant association between academic stress and psychological health at the significance level of 0.01. (Bora et al. 2019)

Research Questions
a. What is the prevalence of academic stress among the college going students in Shillong?
b. What are the various factors affecting academic stress amongst the college going students in Shillong?
c. How do the students cope with their condition?

Research Objectives
a. To identify the prevalence of academic stress among the college going students in Shillong.
b. To examine the factors causing academic stress among the college going students in Shillong.
c. To determine the coping strategies method.

Significance of the study
College students are exposed to a considerable amount of academic stress, which necessitate successful and constantly changing coping strategy. This research will be useful to academicians, students, and common public in general to understand the need of mental health, academic stress issues and coping strategies. It will shed light on the importance of mental health among the tribals. Also, the research will come helpful for future references or secondary researches.

METHODOLOGY
Area of the Study: The data was collected via using multiple standardized scales on the college going students of Shillong, East Khasi Hills District, Meghalaya.

Research Design: Quantitative research is a research strategy that focuses on quantifying the collection and analysis of data. The researchers used the quantitative research design.

Sample Design
Sample Unit: The data was collected from college going students studying in Shillong, Meghalaya. Students between the age of 18 to 26 years old from different colleges were considered for the study.

Inclusion Criteria:
a. Age group of 18 to 26 years
b. Undergraduate students pursuing various courses under the science/commerce/arts stream (BSc/BCom/BA)
c. Students living in Shillong

Exclusion Criteria:
  a. Undergraduate students studying professional courses
  b. Diploma students/PhD scholar
  c. Postgraduate students

Sample Size: The sample size of the present study consisted of a total number of 199 respondents. The sample size has been drawn from the population of study through Snowball Sampling Method based on their age and inclusion, exclusion criteria.

Sample Method: The non-probability purposive sampling method was used in the collection of samples. In this method, a snowball sampling technique was employed.

Methods of Data Collection
For the Data collection of our research, we used two standardized tools.

For Objective 1 & 2
To ascertain the academic stress level of the students, the Academic Stress Scale originally developed by Kim (1970) and later, adapted to Indian conditions by Rajendran and Kaliappan (1990) and then again, Rao (2012) was administered to college going students. The academic stress scale comprises of 40 items. The items are classified into five areas:
  1. Personal Inadequacy
  2. Fear of Failure
  3. Interpersonal difficulties with teachers
  4. Teacher-pupil relationship/Teaching methods
  5. Inadequate study facilities.

For Objective 3
The Brief-COPE was administered to understand the coping strategy methods. The Brief-COPE is a 28 item self-report questionnaire designed to measure effective and ineffective ways to cope with a stressful life event. The Brief-Cope was developed as a short version of the original 60-item COPE scale (Carver et. al., 1989), which was theoretically derived based on various models of coping. Subsequent analysis by Dias et al. (2012) divided the scale into three factors:
  1. Problem-focused coping
  2. Emotion-focused coping
  3. Avoidant coping.

Data Analysis: The statistical methods used in the current study to analyze the data are Excel Sheet & SPSS.

RESULTS

Demographic Profile

Demographic	No. of Respondents
Gender:	
Male	71
Female	128
Age Group:	
18-20	90
21-23	98
24-26	11

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Demographic	No. of Respondents
Courses:	
Bachelor of Science (BSc)	107
Bachelor of Commerce (BCom)	06
Bachelor of Arts (BA)	86

Table No.1: The academic stress of college students is moderate to low stress where majority of the students about 69.3% have average form of academic stress.

Level of Academic Stress	Frequency	Percentage
Low	61	30.7%
Moderate	138	69.3%
High	0	0
Total	199	100.0%

Table No. 2: The academic stress of college students pursuing three different courses which is BSc., BCom., BA., Where the BA students have moderate level of stress (69.3%).

Course of Study	Academic Stress Calculation (Low)	Academic Stress Calculation (Moderate)	Total
BSc.	38 31.9%	81 68.1%	119 100.0%
BCom.	2 50.0%	2 50.0%	4 100.0%
BA	21 27.6%	55 72.4%	76 100.0%

Table No. 3: the age group and academic stress of college students is among the age group of 21-23 which is 50.7%.

Age Group	Academic Stress Calculation (Low)	Academic Stress Calculation (Moderate)	Total
18-20	29 47.5%	60 43.5%	89 44.7%
21-23	30 49.2%	70 50.7%	100 50.3%
24-26	2 3.3%	8 5.7%	10 5.0%
Total	61 30.7%	138 69.3%	199 100.0%

Factors of Academic Stress

Table No. 4: the inadequate study facilities of college students are at moderate level of 43.2% with a frequency of 86.

Level of Academic Stress	Frequency	Percentage
Low	64	32.2%
Moderate	86	43.2%
High	49	24.6%
Total	199	100.0%

Table No. 5: the teacher-pupil relationship/teaching methods of college students is at moderate level of 48.2% with a frequency of 96.

Level of Academic Stress	Frequency	Percentage
Low	69	34.7%
Moderate	96	48.2%
High	34	17.1%
Total	199	100.0%

Table No. 6: the personal inadequacy of college students is at high level of 47.2% with a frequency of 94.

Level of Academic Stress	Frequency	Percentage
Low	28	14.1%
Moderate	76	38.2%
High	94	47.2%
Total	199	100.0%

Table No. 7: the interpersonal difficulties with teacher of college students are at moderate level of 37.7% with a frequency of 75.

Level of Academic Stress	Frequency	Percentage
Low	91	45.7%
Moderate	75	37.7%
High	33	16.6%
Total	199	100.0%

Table No. 8: the fear of failure of college students is at moderate level of 46.7% with a frequency of 93.

Level of Academic Stress	Frequency	Percentage
Low	55	27.6%
Moderate	93	46.7%
High	51	25.6%
Total	199	100.0%

Coping Strategy and college students in Shillong
Table No. 9: the level of coping among the college students is at a moderate level of 77.4% with a frequency of 154.

Level of Academic Stress	Frequency	Percentage
Low	30	15.1%
Moderate	154	77.4%
High	15	7.5%
Total	199	100.0%

Types of Coping Strategy
Table No. 10: the problem focused coping strategy among the college students is at a moderate level of 68.3% with a frequency of 136.

Level of Academic Stress	Frequency	Percentage
Low	32	16.1%
Moderate	136	68.3%
High	31	15.6%
Total	199	100.0%

Table No. 11: the Emotion Focused Coping Strategy among the college students is at a moderate level of 73.4% with a frequency of 146.

Level of Academic Stress	Frequency	Percentage
Low	35	17.6%
Moderate	146	73.4%
High	18	9.0%
Total	199	100.0%

Table No. 12: the Avoidant Coping Strategy among the college students is at a moderate level of 51.8% with a frequency of 103.

Level of Academic Stress	Frequency	Percentage
Low	92	46.2%
Moderate	103	51.8%
High	4	2.0%
Total	199	100.0%

DISCUSSION

The major goal of this study was to determine the prevalence of academic stress along with different causing factors and coping strategy experienced by the college students of Shillong, Meghalaya. To find out the result we have taken the help of SPSS. Microsoft Excel was used to enter and code the data collected from the surveys. Academic stress has become an inseparable part of a student's life nowadays; it brings a great impact on social life of a person. An individual may be unaware of the fact that stress can be the cause of their distorted social life. Stress may become a hindrance in normal life if remained unidentified. Therefore, this research study entitled "A Study on Understanding the Academic Stress & Coping Strategy Amongst College Students in Shillong, Meghalaya" has been conducted to see the academic stress prevalence, different factors of academic stress and the types of coping strategies which the students might be using. 199 subjects were taken in total. The purpose of the study was to analyse the Academic stress & different associated factors along with coping strategy styles using the Academic Stress Scale by Rajendran and Kaliappan (1991) And Brief-Cope Scale by Dias et al. (2012) respectively.

Prevalence & factors of academic stress among the college going students
At International level, Elias, Ping & Abdullah (2011) studied the stress and academic achievement of undergraduate students in a local Malaysian university from different disciplinary areas. Through cluster sampling, a total of 376 undergraduate students were selected to participate in this research. The College Undergraduate Stress Scale (CUSS) was used to evaluate students' stress level. The findings of the study showed that overall, the undergraduate students experienced moderate levels of stress. The medical students had the highest stress level among the students.

In India, Roy, Thomas & Joy (2019) examines the relationship of Emotional Intelligence and Academic Stress among undergraduate students. 119 undergraduate students between the age group of 18-24 from different colleges of Kerala were selected randomly to know the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic stress. The result of the study indicated that there is a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and academic stress.

In our research, the overall result from the respondents shows us that the academic stress among the students studying in different colleges in Shillong, Meghalaya is at a moderate to

low stress where majority of the students about 69.3 percent have average form of academic stress. An analysis of the results by the age group and academic stress of college students is found to be the age group of 21-23 which is 50.7%. Another factor of academic stress which is personal inadequacy among the students was also found at high level of 47.2%. It was found that the teacher/pupil relationship/teaching methods factor of academic stress were highly relevant among the students at a moderate level of 48.2%. Another factor of academic stress which is personal inadequacy among the students was also found at high level of 47.2%. The academic stress scale comprises of 40 items. The items are classified into five areas contained 8 items which are as follows along with the results we found:

- Inadequate Study Facilities: College students is at moderate level with a frequency of 86 and the percentage of 43.2
- Teacher-pupil relationship/teaching methods: College students is at moderate level with a frequency of 96 and the percentage of 48.2
- Personal inadequacy: College students is at high level with a frequency of 94 and the percentage of 47.2
- Interpersonal difficulties with teacher: College students are at moderate level with a frequency of 75 and the percentage of 37.7
- Fear of failure: College students is at moderate level with a frequency of 93 and the percentage of 46.7

Coping Strategies Method Among College Students

At International level, Redhwan (2009) explored the associated factors related to causes of stress and coping strategies among university students. Universal sampling was conducted among 39 of Medical Science and Biomedicine students on their second semester from Management and Science University (MSU), Shah Alam, Malaysia. Three issues were discussed: firstly, how they define the stress; secondly, what the most important causes of stress in their life are; and thirdly, how they cope with stress. The most important causes of stress reported by the students were financial, lack of sleep, and family problems. In terms of coping with stress, the students were able to describe a variety of strategies to cope with their stressful situations.

In India, Ganesan (2018) studied the relationship between stress and coping strategies among university students. 86 university students participated in the study. A quantitative study utilizing a cross sectional non-probability sampling research design was used to gather data. The data was collected using a questionnaire with the addition of Perceived Stress Scale and the Adolescent Coping Scale were administered. The finding of this study showed that majority of the university students have moderate level of stress.

In Shillong, Meghalaya the level of coping among the college students of in our research was found at a moderate level with a frequency of 154 and a percentage of 77.4. The most significant coping strategy which was found to be highly used among the students was the emotion focused coping strategy at 73.4% with a frequency of 146. Through the scale we determined the primary coping styles along with the results which are as follows in three subscales:

- Problem-Focussed Coping: College students is at a moderate level with a frequency of 136 and percent of 68.3
- Emotion-Focussed Coping: College students is at a moderate level with a frequency of 146 and percent of 73.4

- Avoidant Coping: College students is at a moderate level with a frequency of 103 and percent of 51.8

CONCLUSION

This study contributes to a better understanding of the relationship between academic stress and coping strategy among the going students in Shillong, Meghalaya. By examining the prevalence and associated factors of the academic stress and coping strategy, the study will now help the future research. The information gathered from this study should help to improve services provided by social workers, educators and psychologists who work with students by providing insight on academic stress management. The findings of the study will be helpful for parents, students, policymakers, curriculum framers and so many.

Recommendation

Based on the findings of this study, educational institutions should take proactive steps to address the prevalent academic stress among students. This may include providing counseling services, stress management workshops and academic support programs. Educators should also be aware of the factors that influence academic stress so they can create a learning environment that supports students. By taking these steps, educational institutions can help reduce the negative impact of academic stress on students' mental health, academic achievement, and performance.

Limitations

- Time constraints: In this research, the researchers faced time constraints that limit the duration of data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Insufficient time can compromise the completeness and depth of our research.
- Data availability: In this research, the researchers faced limited access to data or limited availability of certain information can limit the scope and breadth of research. Incomplete or unavailable data can introduce bias and affect the accuracy of results.

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Conflict of Interest
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