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Research Paper

Influence of Course Type and Gender on Depression, Anxiety and Stress among College Students

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ABSTRACT

The present study aimed to examine the influence of course type (professional and non-professional) and gender (male and female) on depression, anxiety, and stress among college students. A stratified random sampling technique (probability sampling method) was applied for data collection. A sample of 120 college students, including 60 students (30 male and 30 female) from professional courses and 60 students (30 male and 30 female) from non-professional courses from different professional and non-professional colleges of Kolhapur city. P. F. Lovibond & S. H. Lovibond's Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS-42) is applied to assess psychological difficulties. The obtained data were analysed using descriptive statistics, Levene's test for homogeneity of variance, and Two-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The results reveals that no statistically significant difference found between course type on depression, anxiety and stress. Moreover, no significant difference found between gender in relation to anxiety and stress; but gender difference found on depression. In addition, no significant interaction effect found between course type and gender in relation to depression, anxiety and stress.

Keywords: *Depression, Anxiety, Stress, Course Type, Gender, College Students*

Development is an initial stage of human being. A lot of development process happens in human life especially in different development stages. In the adolescent stage, children enter in college life. So, college life is a vital role in the stage of development among students. A lot of changes and experiences occur during this period such as physical, mental, emotional, behavioural, social, academic etc. which leads to make better to students. Adversely, academic environment, student expectations, academic pressure, burden of class work, examination fear anxiety of result, peer relationships, career decision, competition, financial problems, parental expectations and pressure, family crises, uncertainty about future etc. demands may affect on psychological well-being among the college students. These difficulties may be different for different types of courses. Especially for professional courses such as BCA, medical, engineering, law etc. programmes and courses may involve intensive academic and practical work and training programme, apprenticeship and continuous examinations. Moreover, non-professional courses have different type of academic structure and procedure. Therefore, course type is an important factor and contributes crucial role to assess the depression, anxiety and stress among the

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college students. When students unable to face and manage their demands properly, then it may prime barrier to development and can be birth too much mental and emotional difficulties such as depression, anxiety and stress among the students. Gender is also important factor has been examined in present studies. Most of researches reported that gender differences influence on depression, anxiety and stress among college students. According to Spirito et al. (1991), physical and psychological changes, parental pressure and conflicts, academic pressure, extreme competition, difficulties in career choices etc. caused to depression, anxiety and stress among the college students. These problems are mostly facing by adolescents in current scenario.

In present, depression, anxiety and stress all three are psychological state majorly associated with psychological disorders in student's life. Depression is leading psychological issue among the college students (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Depression is associated with loss of interest, mood change, lack of motivation, negative thoughts and feelings, irrational beliefs etc. Sapolsky & Robert, (2004) stated that minimum level of stress and anxiety helps in performing better among the adolescents; but if it crossed beyond the level then it caused to major psychological problems. It might be occurred due to decrease academic performance, irritability, conflicts in interpersonal relationship. The high level of depression, anxiety and stress may be caused to attempt suicide (Essau et al., 2000). These psychological problems found in both male and female adolescents. Most of researches indicated that gender differences in depression, anxiety and stress. Ahad et al. (2021) academic context and gender may be relevant to students' psychological health.

In this context, present study is an attempt to examine the influence of course type and gender on depression, anxiety and stress among college students.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. Bilgel & Bayram (2014) investigated the influence of depression, anxiety, stress and anger in Trukish high school students. There were 1503 high school students (958 female and 545 male) of 9 to 12 grade from six different public high schools. The age range of the students was between 14 to 19 years. Depression Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS-42) and Multidimensional Anger Scale (MDAS) were applied for the study variables. The obtained data was analyzed by using mean, SD correlation, Mann Whitney U test and Kruskal Wallis Test. The study results stated that female students found significant (higher) level of depression, anxiety and stress than male students.

2. Surbhi (2022) examined a comparison of stress, anxiety and depression among male and female school going adolescents. This study is based on quota sampling method and 120 adolescent students including 60 male (30 Hindu & 30 Muslim) and 60 female (30 Hindu & 30 Muslim) from different five private high schools of Hazaribag district, Jharkhand, India were employed for the study. By using, Personal Data Sheet (PDS) and Lovibond's Depression Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS-42) were used for assessment of the study variables. An effective statistical tool such as Mean, SD and Mann Whitney U test applied for the data analysis. The researcher stated that a female adolescent student indicates high level of stress than male adolescent students. Moreover, no significant difference found between anxiety and depression in relation to gender.

3. Mandyam et al (2023) studied depression, anxiety and stress among medical undergraduate students of a women's medical college, South India. This is cross sectional study including forth year students of MBBS, SVIMS- Sri Padmavati Medical College for

Women, Tirupati (AP). Total sample comprised of 375 medical students. The study variables were assessed by using socio-demographic details of students and Depression, Anxiety, Stress Scale (DASS-42) which is developed by Lovibond and Lovibond (1995) for the assessment of depression, anxiety and stress level of student. The study results showed that level of depression (34.7%), anxiety (44%) and stress (30.3%) found among the students. It was concluded that dissatisfaction/partially satisfaction, study nature, sleeping hours less consumption of water etc. significantly associated with the results.

4. Preet et al. (2024) examined depression, anxiety and stress among undergraduate medical students. This was a cross-sectional comparative study. The researchers have not specified the sampling method in this research. Total 458 (1st to 4th year) undergraduate medical students from Rama Medical College, Hospital & Research Centre, Kanpur were selected and administered self-designed questionnaire for demographic data and Depression Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS-42) on selected sample. For the statistical purpose, employed mean, SD. One-way ANNOVA, Pearson's correlation and Tukey's HSD post-hoc test. The result showed that significantly increasement in the progression of depression, anxiety and stress among medical college students. Moreover, significant relationship found between all three aspects (DAS) among medical college students.

5. Tania Chandra & Dr. Shalini Misra (2024) investigated comparison among depression, anxiety and stress among students of various academic streams. By, using random sampling technique; sample of 134 students (66 male students and 68 female students) from different academic background such as Arts (45), Commerce (47) and Science (42) included in this study. The study variables were assessed by using Depression, Anxiety, Stress Scale (DASS-42) which is developed by Peter F. Lovibond and Sydney H. Lovibond (1995). The obtained data was analyzed through effective statistical tools such as mean, SD and ANNOVA and he found that variation in the level of depression, anxiety and stress among the three academic stream. He also found that extremely severe of anxiety among the university students. Moreover, students from Commerce background found moderate level of depression and stress. In addition, female students indicated extremely severe level of anxiety as compare to male students.

Rationale of the Study

College life is an effective and crucial stage of development for students; can benefit to get experiences regarding academic, personal and social changes during this period. Students may face and fight different kinds of burden and pressures including academic, family and financial concerns, career choice barriers, misjudgement, maladjustment, peer conflicts during this stage. Due to these incompletion or half completion demands and expectations lot of psychological issues and difficulties such as depression, anxiety, anger and stress enters in the student's life. These psychological contribute an important part in the development of college students. Every college provides better environment for students of different courses. These psychological concerns may be different as per the course type especially for professional and non-professional courses including academic expectations and learning atmosphere. In addition, gender may be also associated with different experience, face and tackle to psychological difficulties. That's why, it is important to examine and investigate level of depression, anxiety and stress among the college students in relation to their course types and gender. The aim of the study to understand these difficulties and differences systematically; help to develop suitable psychological support, provide proper counselling and better psychological interventions programmes for improve mental health for college students and institutions.

Problem of the Study

To Study the influence of course type and gender on depression, anxiety and stress among college students.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the levels of depression, anxiety and stress between professional course students and non-professional course students.
2. To compare the levels of depression, anxiety and stress between male and female college students.
3. To examine the interactive effect of course type and gender on depression, anxiety and stress among college students

Hypotheses

1. There will be no significant difference in depression, anxiety and stress between professional and non-professional course students.
2. There will be no significant difference in depression, anxiety and stress between male and female college students.
3. There is no significant interactive effect of course type and gender on depression, anxiety and stress among college students.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design: 2*2 factorial design has been employed for the present study.

Table No. 1 Research Design

Gender (B)	**Course Type (A)**	
	Professional Course (A1)	**Non-professional (A2)**
Male (B1)	A1B1 N = 30	A2B1 N = 30
Female B2	A1B2 N = 30	A2B2 N = 30

The experimental groups which employed in above table are as follows;

A1B1 = Professional Course- Male Students
A1B2 = Professional Course- Female Students
A2B1 = Non-professional Course- Male Students
A2B2 = Non-professional Course- Female Students

Sample

In present study, stratified random sampling method adopted with the students (sample) divided into strata based on course type and gender. The students were selected randomly from each stratum to ensure equal representation of both the course. Total sample consisted of 120 college students including, 60 (30 male and 30 female) professional (B.C.A. & D. Pharmacy) and 60 30 male and 30 female) non-professional (B. A., B.Com. & B. Sc.) from different professional and non-professional colleges of Kolhapur city. The age range of the participants was 18 to 26 years old. The sample range of male and female was 1:1. The following table represents the distribution of the sample.

Variables

Independent Variable :

- Course Type: Professional and Non-professional
- Gender: Male and Female Students

Dependent Variable :

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Stress

Controlled Variables :

- Area of Residence
- Family and Economic Status

Inclusion Criteria:

- UG students with aged 18 to 26 years.
- Students enrolled for professional and non-professional course.

Exclusion Criteria:

- Age below 18 or above 26 years.
- PG students.
- Students unwilling to participate and absent during the testing session.

Operational Definitions:

- **Course Type:** It refers nature of academic programme; in which students is enrolled.
- **Professional Courses:** This is a course which provides specialized knowledge and practical skills in specific profession to students. For example- B.C.A., Medical, Pharmacy, Law etc.
- **Non-professional Courses:** This is a course which relevant to traditional aspect and borden the knowledge and intellectual development of the students. For example- B.A., B.Com., B.Sc. etc.
- **Gender:** It refers to biological sex category including male, female and transgender
- **Depression:** It is a sign of poor mental health and refers negative emotional state with symptoms of sadness, lack of pleasure and motivation, hopelessness etc.
- **Anxiety:** It also refers negative emotional state with symptoms fear, tension, worry, nervousness etc.
- **Stress:** It is physical and psychological state; affects on emotions, thoughts and behaviour of a person.

Tools

The present study used DASS-21 for data collection.

I) Depression Anxiety Stress Scale-21 (DASS-21): It is developed by Peter F. Lovibond and Sydney H. Lovibond (1995). It is a self-report measuring instrument; assesses three negative emotional states (depression, anxiety and stress) of a person. It consists 14 items into 3 subscales Depression subscale (14 items) measures low mood, hopelessness, low self-esteem, and lack of interest or involvement in life. Anxiety subscale (14 items) assesses physiological arousal, situational anxiety, nervousness and subjective feelings of fear. Moreover, stress subscale (14 items) examines tension, irritability, difficulty in relaxing,

over-reactivity and persistent over-arousal. Each statement of the scale is rated on 4-point Likert scale with its range.

0 Did not apply to me at all
1 Applied to me to some degree or some of the time
2 Applied to me to a considerable degree or good
3 Applied to me very much or most of the time

Each subscale has shown 0 to 42 raw score of the respondent. Highest scores of each subscale indicate high level of depression, anxiety and stress. The ranges are classified into five categories such as normal, mild, moderate, severe and extremely severe. The scale has good reliability (Depression scale at 0.91, Anxiety scale at 0.84 and Stress scale at 0.90) and validity and cross-cultural applicability in student and clinical populations (Henry & Crawford, 2005).

Procedure of the Data Collection

After the finalization of study parameters, the researcher visited to the different professional and non-professional colleges; explained the purpose and significance of the research work. After, obtaining formal permission concern authorities, researcher well prepared seating arrangement, maintained good rapport, assuring confidentiality and administered test with proper and simple instructions. He monitored and cleared all of doubts during the testing session. He encouraged to students during testing session. After completion of testing session, he collected the solved tests and checked it filled properly and completely or not. At last, he expressed vote of thanks to all the participated students and administration.

Statistical Treatment:

The following very effective statistical techniques were employed for analyzing the obtained data.

- **Descriptive Statistics:** Mean, Standard deviation (SD).
- **Inferential Statistics:** Two-way ANOVA.
- **Levene's Test:** To test the homogeneity of variances across groups.

RESULTS

Table No. 2 Showing Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances on Course Type and Gender

Dependent Variable	Levene's F Value	df1	df2	Sig. (P value)	Status/Assumption
Depression	5.388	3	116	0.002	Violation observed Significant (Not Met/Heterogeneous)
Anxiety	1.291	3	116	0.281	Non-Significant (Met/Homogeneous)
Stress	1.432	3	116	0.237	Non-Significant (Met/Homogeneous)

Table No.2 depicts that Levene's test of equality of error variance and the assumption of variance homogeneity was calculated for execution of two way ANNOVA. As per the table, equal variance assumption held true for anxiety (F=1.291, P=0.281) and stress (F=1.432, P=0.237). Although, error variance assumption found heterogeneity for depression

(F=5.388, P=0.002). However, the overall ANNOVA findings remain valid as well as robust; because all four subgroup cells feature shows an identical sample size (N=30).

Table No.3 Summary of Two Way ANNOVA of Course Type and Gender in relation to depression, anxiety and stress

Factor	Source of Variation	Sum of Squares (SS)	df	Mean Square (MS)	F-value	(P-value)
Depression	Course Type (A)	1.633	1	1.633	0.038	P>0.05
	Gender (B)	346.800	1	346.800	7.969*	P<0.01
	Course Type *Gender (A*B)	0.300	1	0.300	0.007	P>0.05
	Error	5048.067	116	43.518		
	Total	5396.800	119			
Anxiety	Course Type (A)	1.008	1	1.008	0.039	P>0.05
	Gender (B)	0.208	1	0.208	0.008	P>0.05
	Course Type *Gender (A*B)	8.008	1	8.008	0.313	P>0.05
	Error	2967.567	116	25.582		
	Total	2976.783	119			
Stress	Course Type (A)	27.075	1	27.075	0.979	P>0.05
	Gender (B)	5.208	1	5.208	0.188	P>0.05
	Course Type *Gender (A*B)	46.875	1	46.875	1.695	P>0.05
	Error	3208.433	116	27.659		
	Total	3287.592	119			

Significant at p< 0.01= 6.69 and p< 0.05= 3.86

Table No.2 shows that summary of two way ANNOVA of Course Type and Gender on depression, anxiety and stress. F ratio for course type on depression is (F= 0.038, df 1, 116, P>0.05). F value is not significant at 0.05 level. F ratio for the gender on depression is (F= 7.969, df1, 116, P<0.01). F value is significant at both level of confidence. Interactive effect of course type and gender on depression is (F= 0.007, df 1, 116, P>0.05). F value is not significant at 0.05 level. It means that there is no significance difference in depression between course type and gender.

Above table is showing that F ratio for course type on anxiety is (F= 0.039, df 1, 116, P>0.05). F value is not significant at 0.05 level. F ratio for the gender on anxiety is (F= 0.008, df1, 116, P>0.05). F value is not significant at 0.05 level. Interactive effect of course type and gender anxiety is (F= 0.313, df 1, 116, P>0.05). F value is not significant at 0.05 level. It means that there is no significance difference in anxiety between course type and gender.

Above table is showing that F ratio for course type on stress is (F= 0.979, df 1, 116, P>0.05). F value is not significant at 0.05 level. F ratio for the gender on stress is (F= 0.188, df1, 116, P>0.05). F value is not significant at 0.05 level. Interactive effect of course type and gender stress is (F= 1.696, df 1, 116, P>0.05). F value is not significant at 0.05 level. It means that there is no significance difference in stress between course type and gender.

Mean, SD and F value of Factor A- Course Type in relation to depression, anxiety and stress

Hypothesis no. 1. There will be no significant difference in depression, anxiety and stress between professional and non-professional course students.

Table No. 4 Showing main effect of course type students on depression, anxiety and stress

Factor (A)	Course Type (B)	N	Mean	SD	F	Sign.
Depression	Professional	60	**12.48**	**6.38**	**0.038**	P>0.05
	Non-Professional	60	**12.72**	**7.13**		
Anxiety	Professional	60	**12.62**	**4.55**	**0.039**	P>0.05
	Non-Professional	60	**12.80**	**5.45**		
Stress	Professional	60	**18.17**	**4.59**	**0.979**	P>0.05
	Non-Professional	60	**17.22**	**5.85**		

Significant at p< 0.01= 6.69 and p< 0.05= 3.86

Figure No. 1

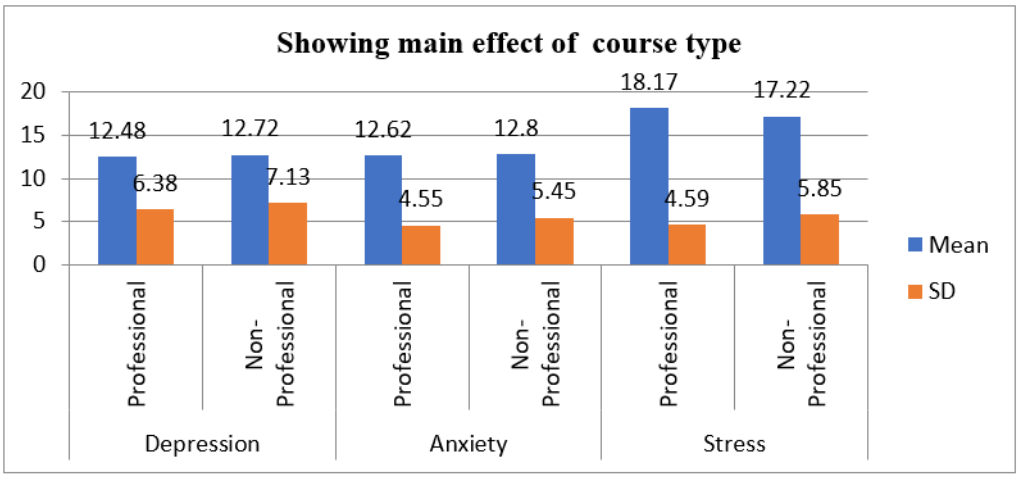


Table No. 4 and Figure no. 1 depicts that main effect of course type on depression, anxiety and stress. The mean of depression among the professional course students (Mean= 12.48, SD= 6.38, P>0.05) shown virtually equivalent to non-professional course students (Mean= 12.72, SD= 7.13, P>0.05). Consequently, the null hypothesis is accepted. It is cleared that there is no significance difference in depression between professional and non-professional course students. It might be found because of, both group experiences equally different academic pressure, career uncertainty and financial concerns equally. Some studies shows, Wong, J. G. et al. (2006) stated that the structural pressures in higher education influenced equally among both professional and non-professional student.

As per the above table, mean score of anxiety among the professional course students (Mean= 12.62, SD= 4.55, P>0.05) and non-professional course students (Mean= 12.80, SD=

5.45, P>0.05) indicated minimal variation. Hence, the null hypothesis is retained. It is cleared that there is no significance difference in anxiety between professional and non-professional course students. It might be found because of, both group experiences examination fear, parent burden, family crisis similarly. Deb, S. et al. (2015) indicated that no significant difference between professional and non-professional course students.

The above table also showing that mean score of professional course students (Mean= 18.17, SD= 4.59, P>0.05) reported slightly higher stress level than non-professional course students (Mean= 17.22, SD= 5.85, P>0.05). Thus, the null hypothesis is retained. It is cleared that there is no significance difference in stress between professional and non-professional course students. It might be found because of, social support, academic workload, personal problems etc. both are contributing equally. Similar studies show that, Reddy, K. Et al. (2018) found that professional and non-professional programs differ significantly on stress level.

Mean, SD and F value of Factor B- Gender in relation to depression, anxiety and stress

Hypothesis No. 2 There will be no significant difference in depression, anxiety and stress between male and female college students.

Table No. 5 Showing main effect of gender on depression, anxiety and stress

Factor	Gender	N	Mean	SD	F	Sign.
Depression	Male	60	**14.30**	**7.90**	**7.969**	P<0.01
	Female	60	**10.90**	**4.82**		
Anxiety	Male	60	**12.67**	**5.22**	**0.008**	P>0.05
	Female	60	**12.75**	**4.81**		
Stress	Male	60	**17.90**	**5.39**	**0.188**	P>0.05
	Female	60	**17.48**	**5.16**		

Significant at p< 0.01= 6.69 and p< 0.05= 3.86

Figure No. 2

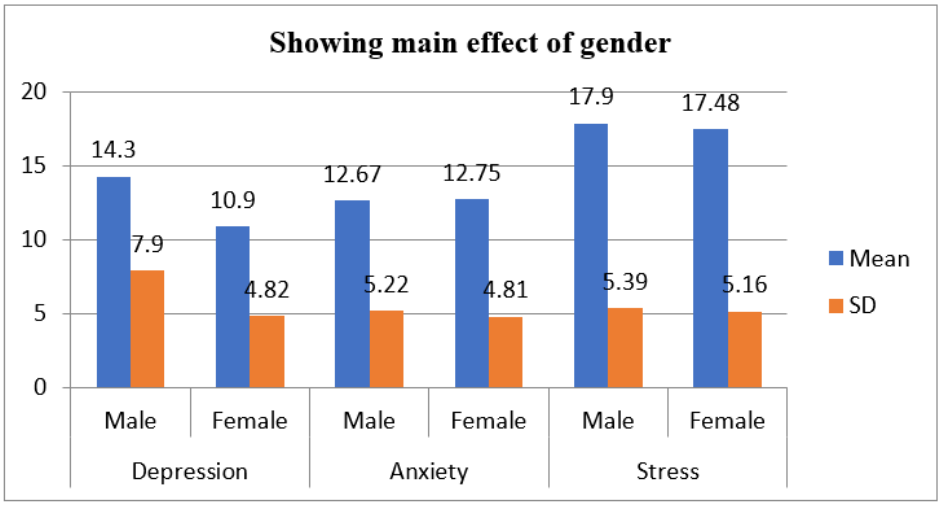


Table No. 5 and Figure no. 2 depicts that main effect of gender on depression, anxiety and stress. Male students (Mean= 14.30, SD= 7.89, P<0.01) exhibited higher depression than female students (Mean= 10.90, SD= 4.82, P<0.01). Consequently, the null hypothesis is rejected. It is cleared that there is significance difference in depression between male and

female student. It might be found because of, both male student shares more academic pressure, financial issues, individual problems, competition etc. than female students. Adewuya, A. O. et al. (2006) reported that male student shows higher depression than female students due to pressure, employment expectations and societal demands.

As per the above table, mean score of male students (Mean= 12.67, SD= 5.22, P>0.05) and female students (Mean= 12.75, SD= 4.81, P>0.05) which did not significantly differ on anxiety. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted. It is cleared that there is no significance difference in anxiety between male and female student. The above result found because of, both gender shares similar exam and study anxiety, future tension, relationship issues, coping mechanism etc. Similar studies show that Nandamuri, P. P., & Gowthami, C. (2011) noted that male and female student experience similar level of anxiety.

The above table also showing that mean score of male students (Mean= 17.90, SD= 5.38 P>0.05) and female students (Mean= 17.48, SD= 5.17, P>0.05) experiences statistically comparable stress among both gender. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted. It is cleared that there is no significance difference in stress level between male and female student. The results might be occurred because of, due to similar academic atmosphere, competition and family aspects they both contribute equally. Similar Studies show that Kumar, S., & Bhukar, J. P. (2013) stated that male and female students similar academic pressures.

Mean, SD and F value of Factor A*B- Course Type*Gender in relation to depression, anxiety and stress

Hypothesis No. 3 There is no significant interactive effect of course type and gender on depression, anxiety and stress among college students.

Table No. 6 Showing interactive effect of course type*gender on depression, anxiety and stress

Factor	Course Type* Gender (A*B)	Course Type	Gender	N	Mean	SD	F	Sign.
Depression	A1B1	Professional	Male	30	14.23	7.49	0.007	P<0.05
	A1B2	Professional	Female	30	10.73	4.50		
	A2B1	Non-professional	Male	30	14.37	8.41		
	A2B2	Non-professional	Female	30	11.07	5.20		
Anxiety	A1B1	Professional	Male	30	12.83	4.71	0.313	P<0.05
	A1B2	Professional	Female	30	12.40	4.45		
	A2B1	Non-professional	Male	30	12.50	5.77		
	A2B2	Non-professional	Female	30	13.10	5.20		
Stress	A1B1	Professional	Male	30	19.00	4.53	1.695	P<0.05
	A1B2	Professional	Female	30	17.33	4.57		
	A2B1	Non-professional	Male	30	16.80	5.98		
	A2B2	Non-professional	Female	30	17.63	5.78		

Significant at p< 0.01= 6.69 and p< 0.05= 3.86

Figure No. 3

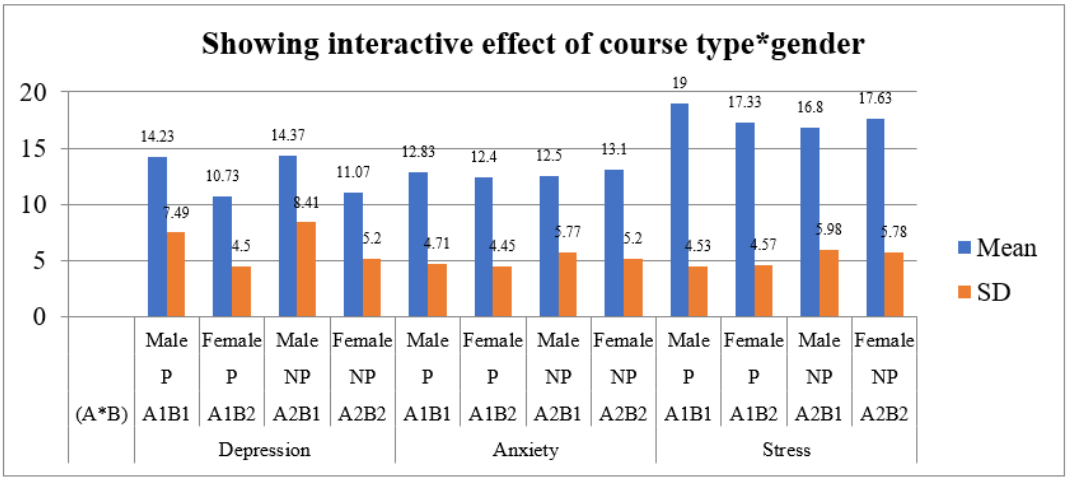


Table No. 6 and Figure no. 3 depicts that interactive effect of course type and gender on depression, anxiety and stress. No significant two way interaction (F=0.007, df= 01, 116, P>0.05) is observed between course type and gender in relation to depression. It might be found because severity remains unchanged across both professional and non-professional domains on depression. Therefore, null hypothesis is still remained. Similar studies show, Adhikari, A. & Sharma, P. (2021) interpreted that no statistically significant difference observed in depression among humanities students. Deb et al. (2015) also noted that no significant interaction found between academic stream and gender on depression.

As per the above table, interaction between course type and gender is found statistically not significant (F=0.577, df= 01, 116, P>0.05) on anxiety. It might be observed that joint effect of academic discipline and gender does not differentiate anxiety. Therefore, null hypothesis is upheld. Some similar studies show, Fairbrother, K., & Warn, J. (2003) & Verma & Gupta (2020) both remarked that male and female students from different programmes and courses uniform equal anxiety.

The above table also showing that interaction of course type and gender did not differ stress level (F=1.695, df= 01, 116, P>0.05). Therefore, null hypothesis is sustained. Similar studies showed that Brougham, R. R., Zuercher, C. M., Fallon, B. J., & Parma, E. A. (2009) highlighted that no significant variation between professional and non-professional courses students and gender.

CONCLUSIONS

1. No significant difference found between course type in relation to depression, anxiety and stress.
2. No significant difference found between gender in relation to anxiety and stress. However, gender difference found in relation to depression; male students exhibit higher depression than female students.
3. No significant interaction effect found between course type and gender in relation to depression, anxiety and stress.

Recommendations

1. Need of psychological support services, organizations different psychological programs and mental health awareness campaigns at school and college stage.

2. Government should be appointing counsellor or psychologist in the school.
3. School and colleges emphasize on different learning methods such as experiential, participative and problem solving.

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Conflict of Interest
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