

A STUDY ON STRESS MANAGEMENT AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Stress has emerged as a major concern among college students due to increasing academic demands, competitive environments, and changing social expectations. The present study examines the sources of stress, its effects on academic performance and well-being, and the coping strategies adopted by college students, with special reference to , . Primary data were collected from 100 undergraduate and postgraduate students using a structured questionnaire. The study reveals that academic pressure and examination-related stress are the most significant contributors to stress. Findings further indicate that stress negatively affects academic performance, physical health, and mental well-being. Although students rely mainly on informal coping mechanisms such as sleep and peer support, professional counselling services remain underutilized. The study emphasizes the need for structured stress management programs, awareness initiatives, and stronger institutional support systems.

Keywords: Stress management, college students, academic stress, coping strategies, mental health

INTRODUCTION

College life represents a critical stage in an individual's personal and academic development. It is a transitional period during which students move from the protected environment of school to a more independent and demanding educational setting. While this phase provides opportunities for intellectual growth, self-discovery, and career preparation, it simultaneously exposes students to numerous stress-inducing factors. The pressure to perform academically, manage social relationships, meet family expectations, plan future careers, and handle financial responsibilities often makes college life highly demanding and stressful.

Stress is a natural response to the challenges and demands of life. In moderate levels, stress can be positive and motivating, helping students remain focused, energetic, and productive. However, when stress becomes excessive or prolonged, it can lead to serious physical, emotional, and psychological consequences. College students today face an increasingly competitive academic environment characterized by heavy coursework, frequent examinations, project deadlines, and continuous evaluation. These academic pressures, combined with social and personal issues, significantly contribute to elevated stress levels among students.

Academic stress is one of the primary sources of pressure for college students. High expectations from parents and teachers, fear of failure, and the constant need to achieve good grades often create emotional strain. In addition, uncertainty regarding career prospects, employability, and future stability adds further pressure. Many students also struggle with financial constraints, particularly those who come from economically weaker backgrounds or live away from home. Managing tuition fees, accommodation expenses, and daily living costs can create persistent anxiety and worry.

Apart from academic and financial challenges, students also encounter social and emotional stressors. Adjusting to new social environments, forming friendships, handling romantic relationships, and dealing with peer pressure are significant aspects of college life. Some students experience loneliness, homesickness, or difficulties in adapting to hostel life. Others may face discrimination, bullying, or conflicts with peers, which can seriously affect their emotional well-being.

When stress exceeds an individual's coping capacity, it may negatively influence both physical and mental health. Common symptoms of excessive stress include headaches, sleep disturbances, fatigue, anxiety, irritability, reduced concentration, and loss of motivation. Over time, chronic stress can lead to serious psychological problems such as depression, panic disorders, and burnout. These conditions not only affect academic performance but also reduce overall quality of life and may result in absenteeism, poor academic outcomes, and even dropouts.

Effective stress management is therefore essential for maintaining students' overall well-being and academic success. Stress management refers to the techniques and strategies used to control stress levels, improve emotional stability, and enhance coping abilities. These strategies may include time management, relaxation techniques, physical exercise, meditation, positive thinking, social support, counselling, and seeking professional help when needed. Students who adopt healthy

coping mechanisms are better equipped to handle challenges, remain emotionally balanced, and perform effectively in their academic pursuits.

Educational institutions play a vital role in supporting students' mental health and stress management. Colleges and universities provide various support services such as counselling centres, mentorship programs, wellness workshops, stress management training, academic advising, and peer support groups. These institutional efforts aim to create a supportive environment where students can openly discuss their concerns and receive appropriate guidance. However, despite the availability of such facilities, many students hesitate to seek professional help due to stigma, lack of awareness, fear of judgment, or misconceptions about mental health services.

In recent years, increasing attention has been given to student mental health, particularly after the COVID-19 pandemic, which intensified academic pressure, social isolation, and emotional distress among students. This has highlighted the urgent need for effective stress management programs and proactive mental health support systems in higher education institutions.

In this context, the present study attempts to analyse the nature and extent of stress among college students at . The study seeks to identify the major sources of stress experienced by students, examine the effects of stress on their physical health, emotional stability, and academic performance, and evaluate the coping strategies adopted by students to manage stress. It also aims to assess the effectiveness of the institutional support systems available to students and their level of awareness and utilization of these services.

By understanding the stress patterns and coping behaviours of students, this research hopes to contribute valuable insights for educators, administrators, and policymakers in designing effective interventions, promoting mental well-being, and creating a healthier academic environment that supports students in achieving both personal growth and academic excellence.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To identify the major sources of stress among college students at .
2. To analyse the impact of stress on students' academic performance and daily life.
3. To examine the stress management techniques used by students.
4. To assess the effectiveness of available support systems such as counselling and faculty support.
5. To suggest measures for improving stress management practices in the college.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The study by Saleh, Camart, and Romo (2017) focused on identifying the main psychological and personal factors that predict stress among college students. It found that perceived stress is not only influenced by external academic pressures but also by internal personal characteristics. Optimism was shown to reduce stress levels by helping students maintain a positive outlook in challenging situations. Self-efficacy played an important role by increasing students' confidence in handling academic and personal demands. Students with higher self-efficacy were better able to manage stressful situations effectively. Psychological distress was identified as a strong predictor that increases perceived stress. The study emphasized that emotional well-being significantly affects how stress is experienced. It highlighted the interaction between mental health and stress perception. The research showed that stress responses vary from student to student based on personal traits. Individual coping abilities were found to shape stress outcomes. Overall, the study concluded that strengthening positive psychological traits can help reduce stress in college environments. The study by Jia and Wenjing Chu (2025) examined the major sources of stress faced by college students, such as academic workload, relationship challenges, and concerns about future careers. It highlighted that academic pressure remains the most common cause of stress among students. Relationship issues with friends, family, and peers were also found to significantly affect emotional well-being. Career uncertainty and fear of unemployment added to students' mental burden. The research identified different coping strategies used by students, including problem-solving, seeking social support, relaxation techniques, and avoidance behaviours. It showed that no single coping method works equally well for all students. The effectiveness of stress management strategies varies depending on personality, environment, and personal resilience. Some students benefit more from active coping, while others prefer emotional or social support. The study emphasized the importance of understanding individual differences in stress response. It concluded that personalized stress management programs are essential in higher education to improve students' mental health and overall well-being. The literature review by M. P. Prajapati and J. Khatun (2025) analysed studies published between 2010 and 2025 to understand the nature of academic stress and coping strategies among college students. The review concluded that academic stress mainly arises from heavy academic workload, competitive academic environments, and increasing social and performance pressures. It highlighted that constant

evaluations, examinations, and expectations to perform well create a stressful learning atmosphere for students. The study identified a wide range of coping strategies used by students, including adaptive methods such as effective time management, problem-solving skills, and seeking social support. It also pointed out the use of maladaptive strategies like avoidance, procrastination, and denial, which negatively impact mental health. The review emphasized that adaptive coping improves academic performance and emotional well-being, while maladaptive coping worsens stress levels. It showed that coping style directly influences students' academic success and psychological stability. The study stressed the importance of promoting healthy coping behaviours in educational institutions. It concluded that proper guidance and stress management training are necessary to help students handle academic stress effectively.

Gong, Z., Wang, H., Zhong, M., et al. (2023) – College Students' Learning Stress, Psychological Resilience, and Learning Burnout Gong and colleagues investigated learning stress and identified psychological resilience as a key mediator between stress and learning outcomes. Their findings underscored the importance of resilience-boosting strategies to counteract burnout and academic stress.

Aina & P. Hermilia Wijayati (Year) – Coping the Academic Stress: Students Dealing with Stress Aina and Wijayati focused on academic stress as a major concern for students and documented that coping strategies varied widely, with students turning to spiritual beliefs, acceptance of reality, and other personal coping behaviours. This emphasizes the cultural and contextual specificity of stress responses.

Gebrezabher Niguse Hailu (2020) – Practice of Stress Management Behaviours and Associated Factors Hailu's study in Ethiopia reported that stress management behaviours among undergraduate students were often poor, and that factors like social support, income, and self-efficacy were significant predictors of how effectively students managed stress.

Literature from Darjeeling Colleges (2025) – Comparative Stress Management Study A review in Darjeeling highlighted that gender, type of institution, and academic workload influence both stress levels and stress management practices among college students, stressing the need for context-sensitive interventions such as counselling, structured sessions, and supportive environments.

Yasien & Alvi (Year) – Stress and Coping Strategies in Undergraduate Medical Students In this study of medical students, approximately half experienced moderate to high stress, and both adaptive and maladaptive coping strategies were observed. The authors emphasized the need for structured stress management programs to strengthen students' coping skills.

He, J. (2023) – Stress and Coping Strategies in Higher Education. He's literature review synthesized research on stress and

coping across higher education, link and physical health outcomes with academic stress and demonstrating that effective coping strategies (e.g., cognitive-behavioural techniques, social support) significantly improve student well-being and performance.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive research design using a questionnaire survey method. Primary data were collected from 100 students (53 postgraduate and 47 undergraduate) of , , using convenience sampling. The questionnaire consisted of sections covering demographic details, sources of stress, perceived stress levels, academic and health impacts, coping strategies, and awareness of institutional support systems.

The questionnaire was developed based on existing literature and validated tools. A pilot study was conducted to ensure clarity and reliability, and minor modifications were made accordingly. Reliability analysis using Cronbach's Alpha indicated acceptable internal consistency (>0.70). Secondary data were collected from journals, books, and research articles to support the study.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The present study adopts a descriptive research design to examine the level of stress, its sources, and stress management practices among college students. This design is appropriate as it helps in systematically describing the characteristics of the study population and understanding existing conditions related to stress and coping mechanisms. Both quantitative and qualitative aspects are considered to obtain a comprehensive understanding of stress and its impact on students' academic performance and mental well-being.

FIELD OF STUDY

The field of study for the present research is Alva's College, Moodbidri, Karnataka. The study was conducted among undergraduate and postgraduate students belonging to different academic programs and years of study. Alva's College was selected as it represents a typical higher education environment where students experience academic pressure, examinations, project work, and career-related stress.

RESEARCH APPROACH

The study follows a mixed research approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative methods.

- **Quantitative approach:**

Structured questionnaires with Likert-scale and multiple-choice questions were used to collect numerical data related to stress levels, sources of stress, and coping strategies.

- **Qualitative approach:**

Open-ended questions were included to capture students' personal experiences, opinions, and suggestions regarding stress management and institutional support systems.

This mixed approach enables a more detailed and balanced analysis of stress among college students.

POPULATION OF THE STUDY

The population of the study comprises undergraduate and postgraduate students of Alva's College, Moodbidri. It includes students from various academic disciplines, years of study, and demographic backgrounds who are exposed to academic and personal stressors. The population represents students who are actively involved in academic activities and are therefore relevant for understanding stress levels and stress management practices in a college environment.

SAMPLE SIZE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

Sample Size

For the present study, a total of 100 students from Alva's College, Moodbidri were selected as the sample. The sample included both undergraduate and postgraduate students from different academic programs and years of study. The selected sample size was considered adequate to represent the student population and to analyse stress levels, sources of stress, and stress management practices in a meaningful manner.

Sampling Technique

The study adopted the convenience sampling technique, as respondents were selected based on their availability and willingness to participate in the survey. This method was suitable due to time constraints and ease of access to respondents within the college campus. Convenience sampling also allowed the researcher to collect data from students belonging to diverse academic backgrounds, ensuring variability in responses related to stress experiences and coping strategies.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

This section presents the analysis and interpretation of primary data collected from 100 undergraduate and postgraduate students of Alva's College, Moodbidri. The data has been analysed using percentage analysis and ANOVA to understand stress levels, sources of stress, and the impact of stress on academic performance and mental well-being.

HYPOTHESIS TESTING

Hypothesis 1 – Stress Level and Academic Performance

Null Hypothesis (H_0):

There is no significant relationship between stress level and academic performance among college students.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_1):

There is a significant relationship between stress level and academic performance among college students.

ANOVA

Model	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Regression	18.72	1	18.72	29.84	.000
Residual	61.58	98	0.628		
Total	80.30	99			

Interpretation:

The ANOVA test was conducted to examine the impact of stress level on academic performance among college students. The statistical results reveal a significant relationship between stress level

and academic performance ($F = 29.84$, $p < 0.05$), leading to the rejection of the Null Hypothesis (H_{01}) and the acceptance of the Alternative Hypothesis (H_{11}). This finding is strongly supported by the descriptive data, which indicates that a majority of students reported moderate to high academic impact due to stress. Consequently, it can be concluded that stress level has a statistically significant and negative effect on students' academic performance.

Hypothesis 2 – Stress Level and Mental Well-Being

Null Hypothesis (H_0):

Stress level has no significant impact on the mental well-being of college students.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_1):

Stress level has a significant impact on the mental well-being of college students.

ANOVA

Model	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Regression	22.48	1	22.48	35.62	.000
Residual	61.82	98	0.631		
Total	84.30	99			

Interpretation:

Based on the statistical analysis, the Null Hypothesis (H_{02}) is rejected and the Alternative Hypothesis (H_{12}) is accepted, as the results demonstrate a statistically significant impact of stress level on students' mental well-being. Descriptive data indicates that a majority of respondents reported experiencing anxiety, mood swings, and emotional imbalance during periods of high stress. Because the significance value (p-value) is lower than the standard alpha level of 0.05, it is concluded that stress level has a significant and measurable effect on the mental health of college students.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that stress is a significant and persistent issue among college students, with academic pressure being the major contributing factor. Students face continuous demands related to examinations, assignments, competition, and future career concerns, which increase their stress levels. Stress has a negative impact on academic performance by reducing concentration, motivation, and productivity. It also affects physical health by causing fatigue, headaches, sleep disturbances, and other stress-related problems. Mental well-being is equally disturbed, leading to anxiety, depression, and emotional instability. Although students try to manage stress through informal coping methods such as talking to friends, listening to music, or taking breaks, these methods are often temporary solutions. Many students are unaware of effective stress management techniques. Institutional counselling services and support systems are available but remain largely underutilized. Fear of stigma and lack of awareness prevent students from seeking professional help. There is a need to promote mental health awareness within educational institutions. Colleges should introduce structured stress management programs and workshops. Regular counselling sessions should be made accessible and student-friendly. Stress management should be integrated into academic life as a preventive measure. Faculty support and guidance can play a vital role in reducing academic stress. Creating a supportive and understanding campus environment is essential. Overall, proactive and well-planned stress management strategies are necessary to enhance students' academic success and overall well-being.

FUTURE SCOPE FOR RESEARCH

The present study provides valuable insights into stress levels and stress management practices among college students; however, there is considerable scope for further research in this area. Future studies can expand the sample size by including students from multiple colleges or universities across different regions, which would improve the generalizability of the findings. Comparative studies between urban and rural institutions or government and private colleges can also be undertaken to identify variations in stress levels and coping mechanisms. Further research may adopt advanced statistical tools such as regression analysis, structural equation modelling, or longitudinal studies to examine long-term effects of stress on academic

performance and mental health. Future studies can also explore the role of institutional support systems, counselling services, and mindfulness-based interventions in reducing student stress. Additionally, qualitative research methods such as in-depth interviews and focus group discussions may be used to gain deeper insights into students' personal experiences and emotional challenges, thereby enriching the understanding of stress management in higher education institutions.

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