

## A Comparative study on Role of Gender in Stress of College Going Students

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### Abstract

This study investigates the differential impacts of gender on stress levels among college students. Employing a mixed-method approach, the research examines both quantitative and qualitative data collected from surveys and interviews of students from various colleges. The analysis focuses on various stressors including academic pressure, social relationships, financial concerns, and future uncertainties. The study aims to discern patterns of stress prevalence, coping mechanisms, and psychological outcomes across different genders. Results suggest significant differences in the sources and manifestations of stress between male and female students, providing insights for targeted mental health interventions in collegiate settings.

**Keywords:** Gender differences, college stress, academic pressure, mental health, coping mechanisms

### Introduction

The transition to college life introduces a complex array of stressors affecting students' mental health and academic performance. Understanding the influence of gender on these stress levels is crucial, as it may guide the development of targeted interventions. Prior research indicates that male and female students may experience and respond to stress differently due to societal expectations, psychological tendencies, and socialization patterns (Misra & McKean, 2000;

Courtenay, 2000). This study aims to explore these differences in a contemporary college setting, highlighting how gender influences stress perception and management among college students.

Stress is the body's and mind's normal reaction to perceived dangers or difficulties in the surroundings. The intricate interplay amongst cognitive evaluation, affective reactions, and the body's coping systems for the stressor is involved.

**The Reaction to Stress:** The sympathetic nervous system of the autonomic nervous system, which is involved in the "fight-or-flight" reaction, is activated by stress. Adrenaline and cortisol are released, causing bodily changes like fast breathing, elevated heart rate, and enhanced attentiveness. Any kind of change that puts strain on one's body, mind, or emotions is referred to as stress. Your body reacts to anything that needs attention or action by putting you under stress. Everyone goes through periods of stress. However, how you handle stress has a significant impact on your general wellbeing. Occasionally, altering your circumstances is the most effective method to handle your stress. Other times, altering your response to the circumstance is the best course of action.

It's critical to gain a thorough awareness of the effects stress has on both your physical and mental well-being. It's also critical to understand the relationship between your stress level and your physical and mental wellbeing.

## **Common Symptoms of Too Much Stress**

### **Identifying Stress**

- Although it's not always easy to spot stress, there are ways to spot some telltale symptoms that you may be under too much pressure. Small daily worries from job, school, family, and friends can occasionally have a negative impact on your mind and body in addition to more obvious sources of stress.
- Psychiatric symptoms such trouble focusing, worrying, anxiety, and memory problems
- Physical symptoms include high blood pressure, weight fluctuations, recurrent colds or infections, and changes in the menstrual cycle and libido;
- Emotional symptoms such being agitated, angry, gloomy, or disappointed
- Behavioral indicators including inadequate self-care, a lack of time for hobbies, or a reliance on alcohol and drugs as a coping mechanism

### **Stress vs. Anxiety**

Anxiety and stress are commonly confused, and being under a lot of stress can exacerbate anxiety symptoms. Anxiety can aggravate existing health problems, such as depression, gastrointestinal disorders, and an increased risk of sickness. It can also make it more difficult to manage stress.

Anxiety and stress are linked to jitters, restless nights, elevated blood pressure, tense muscles, and excessive concern. Anxiety is typically the result of your internal response to stress, whereas stress is typically brought on by outside events. Anxiety might last long after the initial stressor has passed, whereas stress can disappear as soon as the threat or circumstance passes.

### **Causes of Stress**

There are a wide range of situations in life that might be stressful. Among the primary causes of stress are day-to-day annoyances, work, money, relationships, and parenting. The fight-or-flight reaction, which is the body's reaction to a perceived threat or danger, can be triggered by stress. Adrenaline and cortisol are two of the hormones released during this reaction. This gives the body a boost of energy and power by increasing heart rate, decreasing digestion, diverting blood supply to key muscle regions, and altering a number of other autonomic nervous system processes. The fight-or-flight response was initially named for our capacity to use it to physically defend ourselves or flee from danger. However, it is now triggered in circumstances where either reaction is inappropriate, such as during a stressful workday or while stuck in traffic.

Systems are built to use the relaxation response to revert to regular operation once the perceived threat has passed. However, under chronic stress situations, the relaxation response is insufficient, and the body may suffer harm from being in a nearly continual fight-or-flight state. Stress can also result in unhealthy habits that are detrimental to your well-being. To reduce stress, for instance, a lot of people overeat or smoke. In the long run, these bad habits lead to greater issues and harm the body.

### **Types of Stress**

Not all types of stress are harmful or even negative. Some of the different types of stress that you might experience include:

**Acute stress:** This is the most common sort of stress we experience in our daily lives; it is a very brief form of stress that can be either positive or more upsetting.

**Chronic stress** is defined as stress that feels unending and unavoidable, such as the tension resulting from a difficult marriage or a very demanding profession. Traumatic events and early trauma can also cause chronic stress. Acute stress that seems to run wild and become a way of life is known as episodic acute stress, which results in a life of continual suffering.

**Eustress:** It's thrilling and enjoyable. It's said to as a healthy kind of stress that helps maintain your energy levels. It is linked to highs in adrenaline, like those experienced when skiing or racing against the clock.

Acute stress, chronic stress, and episodic acute stress are the three main detrimental forms of stress. While episodic acute stress is often short-lived yet frequent, acute stress is often short-lived. Eustress, sometimes referred to as positive stress, has its benefits and drawbacks.

### **Impact of Stress on College Students**

- **Mental Health:** Conditions like anxiety and depression can be exacerbated by prolonged or excessive stress. It's possible for students to feel overwhelmed, powerless, and burned out.
- **Academic achievement:** Stress can impair motivation, focus, and memory, which can lower academic achievement. This could result in a vicious cycle where stress levels rise as a result of subpar performance.
- **Physical Health:** Prolonged stress can have a negative impact on students' physical health, resulting in conditions including immune system weakness, headaches, stomach troubles, and sleep disruptions.
- **Social Relationships:** Stress can cause problems in relationships with family, friends, and instructors. Students might become reticent in social situations or run into disagreements with others.
- **Dangerous Behaviors:** When it comes to stress management, some students may resort to unhealthy coping strategies including substance misuse, overindulgence in food, or dangerous activity.

### **Treatments for Stress**

There is no one-size-fits-all medical diagnostic for stress, nor is there a single, effective treatment. Changing the environment, learning coping mechanisms, practicing relaxation techniques, and addressing any symptoms or disorders that may have been brought on by chronic stress are the main goals of stress treatment.

Complementary and alternative medicine (CAM), medication, and therapy are a few approaches that could be beneficial.

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

A review of the research on the relationship between gender and stress in college-bound students looks at how stress is experienced differently by male and female students, as well as the varied causes of stress and coping mechanisms. Gender disparities in stress levels and coping strategies have been documented by research, and these differences can have a substantial impact on students' mental health, academic performance, and general well-being. Here is a summary of the

main conclusions drawn from the body of research on the subject, along with links to additional reading:

### **Gender Differences in Stress Levels**

**Higher Stress Among Female Students:** Research has shown that, in comparison to their male peers, female college students typically report higher levels of stress (Dyson & Renk, 2006; Kitzrow, 2003). A combination of social expectations, interpersonal interactions, and academic demands could be to blame for this.

**Variability in Stressors:** Although stress is felt by both male and female students, there may be differences in the sources of stress. Male and female students may be more stressed out about performance and professional goals, while female students may be more stressed out about interpersonal connections and self-esteem difficulties (Misra et al., 2000).

### **Coping Strategies and Gender**

**Emotion-focused Coping:** According to Ptacek et al. (1994; Folkman & Lazarus 1980), female students are more likely to utilize emotion-focused coping strategies include talking about their feelings, asking for social support, and practicing relaxation techniques.

**Problem-focused Coping:** According to Tamres et al. (2002), male students are more likely to employ problem-focused coping techniques including making plans and acting directly to resolve stressful situations.

**Avoidance Coping:** According to certain research, men may employ avoidance techniques like substance abuse or distancing themselves from the stressor more frequently than women (Matud, 2004).

### **Impact of Gender on Stress Outcomes**

**Mental health:** Because they tend to experience higher levels of stress and rely more on emotion-focused coping, female students may be more prone to anxiety and depression (Verger et al., 2009; Dyson & Renk, 2006).

**Academic Performance:** Although high levels of stress can have a poor impact on academic performance for students of both genders, female students may be more susceptible to these effects because of their greater overall stress levels (Misra & McKean, 2000).

**Implications for Interventions and Support Tailored Approaches:** Recognizing how gender affects stress might aid in the development of focused interventions that address the particular stressors and coping mechanisms that male and female students face (Gleason et al., 2008).

Encouraging Social Support: Female students tend to rely more heavily on social support as a coping technique, hence it is beneficial to both genders of students to encourage social support and a sense of community (Clack & Peters, 2006).

### **Limitations of Existing Literature and Future Research**

Previous studies have shed light on the ways in which gender influences stress levels among college students; however, further study is required to fully comprehend the subtle variations in these relationships in various cultural and contextual contexts. Longitudinal studies are also required to investigate the ways in which gender-related stress and coping strategies change over time and affect students' long-term health.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Sample**

50 Participants comprising of female and male college students were taken as the sample. The sample comprised of incidentally selected 25 female and 25 male college students.

### **Tool**

A Student stress Questionnaire was used to verify stress level of college going students.

### **Procedure**

The research was conducted to study whether there was any difference in the stress level of female and male college going students. A Students stress questionnaire was prepared to test the stress level of college going students. The questionnaire consisted of 51 questions each has been provided with five options, which are always, often, sometimes, rarely and never. The five point rating scale has been followed and hence starting from never to always score is given from 1 to 5 (positive items). There are some negative items which are scored from 5 to 1 for response never to always, respectively.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The only problem of the research was to study gender difference in stress level of college going students. It was hypothesized that there would be genuine difference in stress level of female and male college going students. The mean of the scores of the female college going student was 166.64 and the mean of male college going student was 129.12. It is clear that female college going student had more stress as compared to male students. To check the significance of



difference between the two means 't' was calculated. The obtained t (t=6.078) is significant at 0.01 level of significance for 48 degree of freedom. The significant statistic provide empirical ground to prove the research hypothesis, i.e, College females are working harder and feeling more stress while male counterparts are having a good time. Teen males spent considerably more time exercising ,partying, watching TV, and playing video games, while female are juggling more household and child care chores, studying more and doing more volunteer work. On the other hand females are taking on more and more responsibilities and feel stressed.

It can be concluded that there existed a genuine difference in the stress level of female and male college going students, i.e, female adolescent had genuinely higher level of stress than male college going adolescent. The findings are depicted in Table No:1.

**Table No.1:Average Stress Level Scores for College Students**

Group	n	Mean	$\sum X^2$	Obtained t Value	Level of Significance
Female college student	25	166.64	11553.52	6.078	P<0.01
Male college students	25	129.12	11317.67		

## SUMMARY

Stress is a feeling experienced when a person thinks that "the demands exceed the personal and social resources the individual is able to mobilize. Stress can be therefore negative, positive ,or neutral. Passing in an examination can be stressful, as failing. Sometimes we know in advance that doing a certain things will be stressful ,but we are willing to do that .Too much stress is harmful. One should know his level of stress that allows him to perform optimally in his life.

The present work is intended to compare the stress level of female and male college going students. An incidental sampling techniques was adopted to select the final sample of 25 female and 25 male college going students. Subjects were administered a student stress questionnaire.

The obtained data were analyzed with the help of t-test. Obtained t value was 6.078 which was significant at 0.01 level of significance for 48 degrees of freedom. From the obtained data it can be concluded that the re did exist a genuine difference in stress level of female and male college

going students. Significant t value provided ample statistical ground to accept the research hypothesis, that is females truly had high stress level than males.

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