

ASSESSING THE MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF THE COLLEGE STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT:

The mental health and emotional well-being of the students is often overlooked upon in the present educational system. The academic, professional and personal success of students depend to a large extent on their mental health and emotional well-being. The present environment in the education puts a lot of pressure on the students to excel academically and along with that, the expectations of the society and parents also add to that pressure. Moreover, the influence of social media also plays a significant role in the physical and mental health of the students. However, because of the social stigma of mental health, the students hesitate to take any professional help which further worsens the problem. The present study aims to examine the mental health and wellbeing of the college students in the city of Ahmedabad. The findings point out that the students face various challenges such as balancing their academics and activities, time management and irregular sleep patterns. The alarming finding is with respect to engagement in the physical activity by the students. Around 52% of the students engage in the physical activity for less than 2 hours and only 12% of the students engage in physical activity for more than six hours during the week. Gender has a significant association with almost all the parameters measured for stress and anxiety and Place of stay do not have any significant association with any of the parameters measured for stress and anxiety. There is a significant difference in the overall health of male and female students. The mean values suggest that the male students have a better overall mental health and well-being.

Keywords: mental health, college students, emotional wellbeing, social media, academic stress

INTRODUCTION :

The transition from school to college is a significant phase in the life of a student. Once the teenagers enter college, they experience academic changes, social changes coupled with newfound independence. This shift can be exciting and invigorating. But along with this there are unique set of its stress and anxiety factors that affect their mental health and well-being. Mental health is inclusive of emotional, social and psychological well-being which helps an individual to handle stress and take right decisions. Well-being not only means that an individual has a good mental health but it also extends to good physical health and a holistic approach to lead life. The mental health and well-being of the college going students really needs attention as the academic, professional and personal success of students depend to a large extent on their mental and emotional well-being. A student in the present educational system experiences various kinds of stress- namely academic stress, stress to meet their parents' expectations and peer pressure. Their desire to be noticed on the social media and other platforms also put them into mental unrest. When the students are not able to handle the stress, they develop suicidal tendency. The present study aims to examine the mental health and wellbeing of the college students in the city of Ahmedabad

LITERATURE REVIEW :

Kokosadze & Lortkipanides (2023) survey around 18500 students in the age group of 18-24 from seven universities in Georgia. They tried to focus on the mental health awareness. Half of the students feel to take professional help for their mental anxiety and stress but they are not ready to take any professional help for the same. The students reported that there is lack of information on the professionals providing professional help. High fees charged by the specialist is also one of the reasons for not taking professional help.

Karuniawati, et al. (2022) performed a cross-sectional study of assessing the mental health and quality of life of undergraduate students in Indonesia. The survey was conducted during the COVID-

19 outbreak. The results indicated that there is significant association between mental health and quality of life and factors like gender, age, COVID-19 detected in the family and also family support. The research team of **American College Health Foundation in 2021** conducted research to measure the well-being of stakeholders on campus. The research reported that the mental health and well-being of the faculty and staff were better than that of the students. The research concluded that the mental health and well-being is significantly affected by the environment and the values of the institution, mental support from the institution, a feeling of being valued and associated with the institution and the diversity on campus.

Rebello, Kallingappa & Hegde (2018) examined the perceived stress among the first year students studying medicine. The highly rated stressors identified by the students were performance in the examination, frequency of exams, lack of time for recreation and curricular. Moreover, the quality of food in the mess and lack of entertainment were highly rated psychological stressors.

Wyatt, et al. (2017) conducted a secondary study on the basis of the students' data of the American College Health Association. The research focused on the mental health of the college students and concluded that the students of first year at college had more suicidal tendencies as compared to their seniors. And the senior students faced more of academic stress.

Reddy (2017) examined the help seeking behaviour for mental disorders among the students. As survey of 760 students pointed that around 59% of the students experience mental health problem. An alarming finding is that around 8% of the students had a tendency of harming themselves. 78% students took help for their mental status of mind. Out of the total students, only 16% shared their mental health problems with professionals and took their help. The rest of the students took help from informal sources like family and friends.

Tseng, Abdullah, Merrill & Aung (2016) surveyed 22 students over the duration of an academic semester. The findings pointed out that students sleep less during exams and experience more stress during exams and break.

Oku, Owoaje & Monjok (2015) assessed the mental health of the medical trainees in Nigeria. The results indicated that the mental health of about 61% of the trainees was good whereas that of 39% was poor. The reasons identified for poor mental health were ill-treatment by the instructors, insufficient monthly allowances and the taxing medical training.

Uner (2015) examined the mental health status of the students of University and the various factors that influence the mental health. The results suggested an association between academic achievement and a negative event in the last year and the mental health.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY :

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

1. To examine the mental health and well-being of the college students in Ahmedabad.
2. To identify the various aspects which causes stress (academic, physical and mental health problems, social media usage) amongst by the students
3. To find out if there is any association between the mental health and well-being of students and the various aspects causing stress.

A survey was conducted to assess the mental health and well-being of the college students in the city of Ahmedabad. A structured questionnaire was used to collect the data. The questionnaire was drafted taking into consideration three important aspects which affects the mental health and well being of the college students. Academic stress, physical and mental problems and challenges faced by the students and social media usage. The results of the Cronbach's alpha of the items 15 items selected is 0.74.

Sampling: The research followed the convenience sampling. The data was collected through floating a Google form and a response of 240 students were received. The benefit of google form is that there are no incomplete responses. The profile of the sample is showed in the following table.

Gender	Frequency	Percentage	Discipline of Study	Frequency	Percentage
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Male	135	56.	Commerce & Management	93	39
Female	105	44	Arts/Humanities/Law	15	6
Total	240	100	Science & Pharmacy	14	6
			Engineering & Design/ Architecture	14	6
			IT & Software	27	11
			Medicine	77	32
			Total	240	100
Student of	Frequency	Percentage	Place of Stay	Frequency	Percentage
Graduation	167	70	Home	98	41
Post Graduation	73	30	Hostel	78	33
Total	240	100	Paying Guest	64	26
			Total	240	100

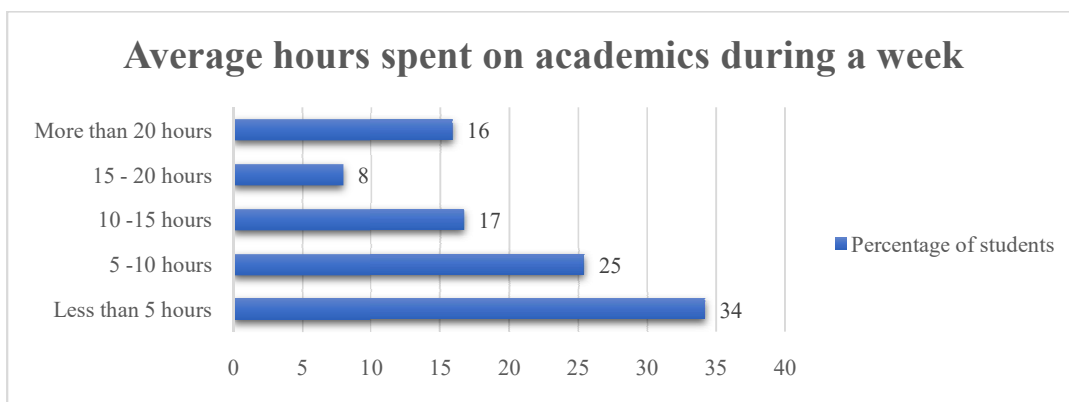
TOOLS OF ANALYSIS

The collected data has been represented through percentage analysis and graphical representation. Further, the data has been analysed using SPSS 25. Chi-Square test has been applied on the data to examine the association between the mental health and well-being and the various aspects causing stress

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

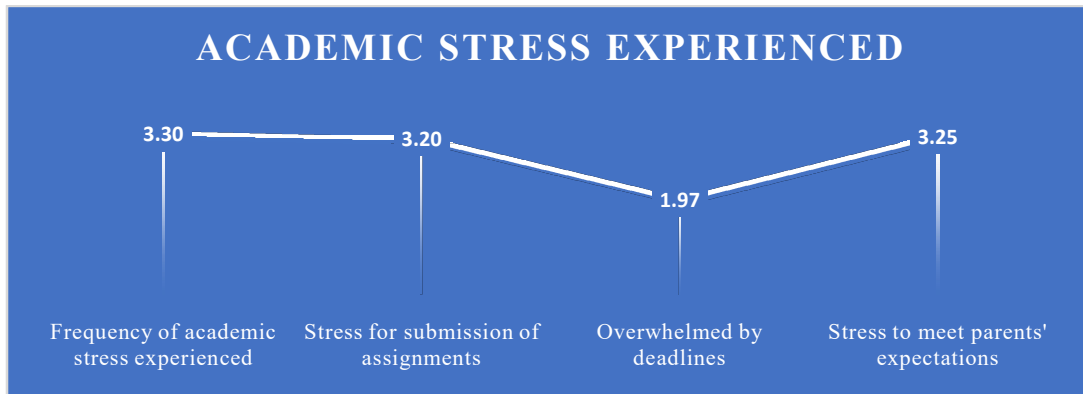
The students were asked about the number of hours they spent on academics in addition to their college hours. It is very surprising that 34% of the students spend less than 2 hours on academics during the entire week, 25% spend 5- 10 hours, 17% spend 10-15 hours, only 8% spend 15-20 hours and 16% spend more than 20 hours.

Figure:1



The present academic system is very competitive and it is very difficult for the students to keep up with their academics. The students were asked about the degree of academic stress that they experience. The following line chart shows the mean values of the degree of academic stress experienced by the students.

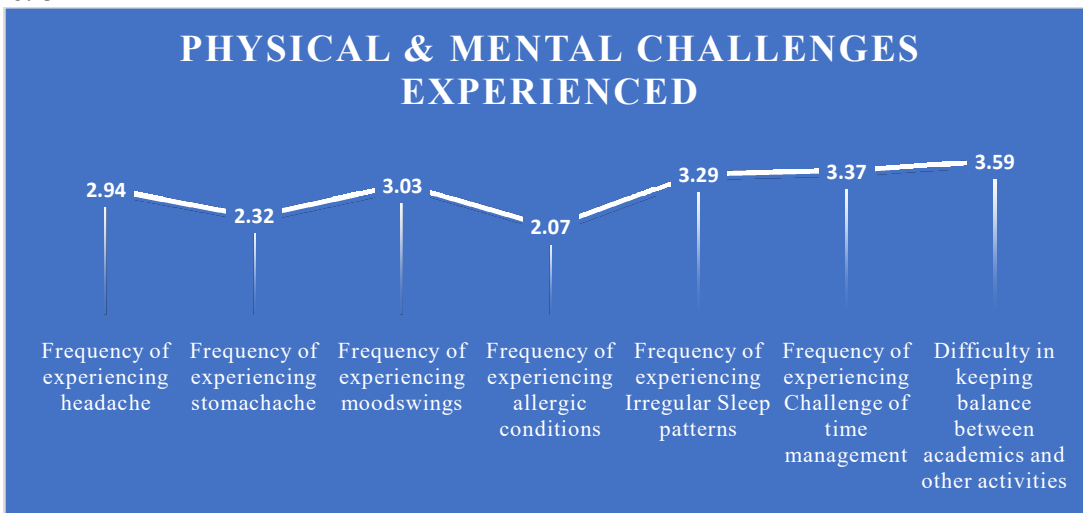
Figure: 2



The above line chart suggests that the students experience almost equal level of stress with respect to academic performance, submission of assignments and meeting parents' expectations. Probably the academic stress can be managed by the increase in efforts put by them but it is also for the parents to rethink on their behaviour toward their children. A lot of times, we see newspapers headlines about the suicides committed by students as they could not fulfil their parents' expectations.

The students were also asked about the various physical and mental health problems faced by them. The following line chart presents the mean values of the frequency of the physical and mental challenges experienced by the students.

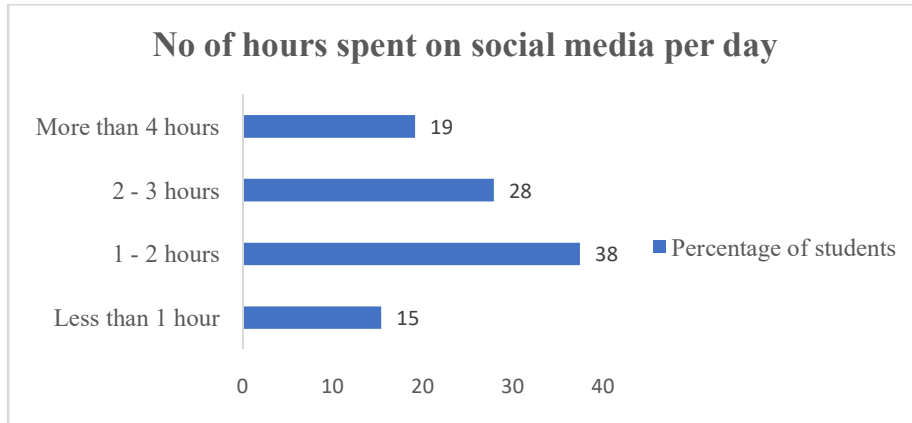
Figure: 3



The mean values suggest that the students really face difficulties in maintaining a balance between their academics and other activities. They have little time for recreation and entertainment or pursuing their hobbies which makes their life more stressful. They always face the challenge of time management. Irregular sleep patterns not only affect their physical health but is also one of the reasons associated with various diseases. Their mood swings affect not only disturb them mentally but it also affects their academic performance and overall development of their personality.

Social media has a strong influence on everyone's life nowadays. And the students are more vulnerable to the influence of social media. The social media behaviour of the students also has a role to play on their mental health and emotion well-being. 15% students spend less than one hour on social media, 38% students spend 1-2 hours on social media, 28% students spend 2-3 hours and 19% spend more than four hours on the social media.

Figure:4

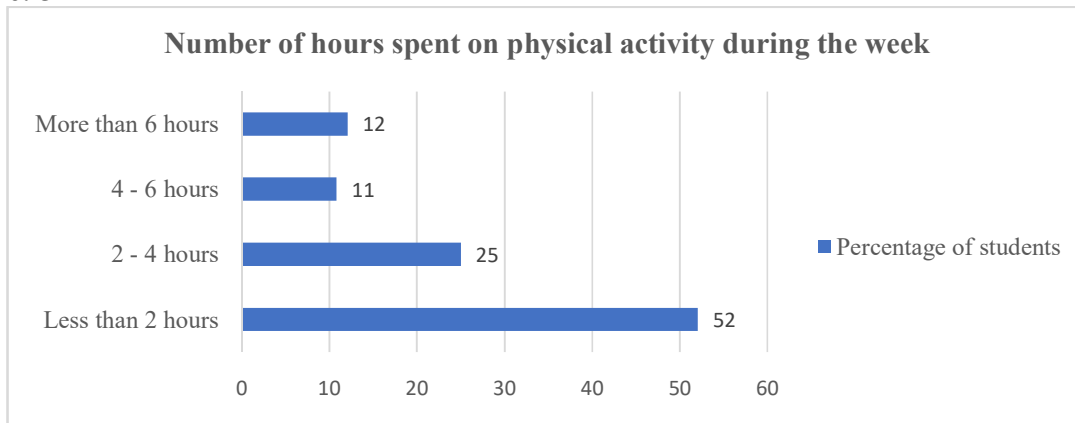


The use of social media puts mental stress and pressure to maintain a certain image on social media. Around 19% feel the stress about maintaining their image on social media and 65% do not feel the stress about maintaining their image on social image, while 16% are not sure about their opinion on the same. Around 10% of the students face cyber bullying and negative comments on social media which negatively affects their mental health and well-being while 90% do not face cyber bullying or negative comments on social media. 14% students compare themselves with others on social media while 70% do not compare their themselves with others on social media. 16% are not sure about the same.

55% of the students feel comfortable talking to their friends to overcome stress while 30% of the students talk with their family and 15% engage in various hobbies such as singing, dancing, yoga etc. to overcome the stress.

Physical activity is very important for the overall health and well-being of the students. The following bar graph represents number of hours the students spend on physical activities during the week.

Figure: 5



The above graph presents alarming results. 52% of the students spend less than two hours on physical activities during the week while only 12% students spend more than six hours on physical activity during the week. 25% spend two to four hours and 11% spend four to six hours.

Around 16% of the students feel the need to take professional help to overcome stress, 69% do not feel the need to take any professional help while 15% are not sure whether they want any professional help or not. There is a social stigma to take professional help to overcome the stress and anxiety. And therefore, when the students were asked if they are interested in any programs that promote positive mental health, 43% reported that they were interested in such programs. 36% did not show any interest in such programs while 21% are not sure. 86 % of the students reported their

mental health and well-being ranging from excellent to good while only 16% reported their mental health and well-being to be poor

**RESULTS OF CHI SQUARE TEST:
HYPOTHESIS TESTING:**

1. H₀: There is no significant association between Gender, discipline of study, place of stay, class of study and academic stress
2. H₀: There is no significant association between Gender, discipline of study, place of stay, class of study and stress and anxiety to submit assignments
3. H₀: There is no significant association between Gender, discipline of study, place of stay, class of study and students being overwhelmed by deadlines
4. H₀: There is no significant association between Gender, discipline of study, place of stay, class of study and stress towards meeting parents' expectations
5. H₀: There is no significant association between Gender, discipline of study, place of stay, class of study and stress and hours spent on social media
6. H₀: There is no significant association between Gender, discipline of study, place of stay, class of study and stress and engagement in physical activity
7. H₀: There is no significant association between Gender, discipline of study, place of stay, class of study and stress and anxiety to submit assignments
8. H₀: There is no significant association between Gender, discipline of study, place of stay, class of study and need to take professional help to overcome stress and anxiety
9. H₀: There is no significant association between Gender, discipline of study, place of stay, class of study and stress and overall mental health

Table-1 – Chi-Square Test Results- Demographic Factors & Various aspects of Mental Health and Well- being

Aspects of Mental Health and Well-being	P-values			
	Gender	Discipline of Study	Graduation / Post Graduation	Place of Stay
Academic Stress	*0.020	*0.045	*0.045	0.085
Stress/ Anxiety to submit Assignments/ Projects	*0.032	0.662	0.103	0.432
Overwhelmed by Deadlines	*0.012	0.777	*0.001	0.662
Stress towards meeting parents' expectations	*0.038	*0.045	0.619	0.620
Hours spent on social media	0.074	*0.000	*0.002	0.402
Engagement in physical activity	*0.000	0.121	0.093	0.337
Need to take professional help to overcome stress and anxiety	0.166	0.886	*0.010	0.657
Overall mental health	0.010	0.761	0.880	0.126

*Significant at 5% level of significance

Source : The Author

On the basis of the p-value depicted in the table, it can be concluded that there is a strong association between Gender and academic stress, Stress/anxiety to submit assignments, students being overwhelmed by deadlines, stress towards meeting parents' expectations, engagement in physical activity and overall mental health. There is a significant association between discipline of study and academic stress, stress towards meeting parents' expectations and hours spent on social media. There is a significant association between class of study and academic stress, students being overwhelmed by deadlines and hours spent on social media. Surprisingly there is no significant association between place of stay and any of the aspects on mental health and well-being.

RESULTS OF MANN-WHITNEY U TEST AND KRUSKAL WALLIS TEST :

1. H_0 : There is no significant difference in the overall health of male and female students
2. There is no significant difference in the overall health of students of public and private institutes
3. There is no significant difference in the overall health of graduation and postgraduation students
4. There is no significant difference in the overall health of students across discipline of study
5. There is no significant difference in the overall health of students staying at home, at hostel or as paying guest.

In order to find whether there is any significant difference in the overall health of students of male or female students, of graduation or post-graduation students and private or public institute students, Mann Whitney U test was conducted. The following table presents the p-value for the same.

Table-2 Results of Mann-Whitney U Test

Mann-Whitney U Test Results	
Variable	p-value
Gender	0.00
Class of study	0.582
Type of Institute	0.286
*Significant at 5% level of significance Source: The Author	

Table – 3 - Kruskal Wallis Test Results

Kruskal Wallis Test Results	
Variable	p-value
Discipline of study	0.579
Place of stay	0.560
*Significant at 5% level of significance Source: The Author	

The results of the Mann-Whitney test suggest that there is significant difference in the overall mental health of male and female students. The mean values suggest that the male students have a better overall health as compared to the female students. There is no significant difference in the overall mental health of students of graduation and post-graduation and students of private and public institution. The results of Kruskal Wallis suggest that there is no significant difference in the overall mental health of students across various disciplines of study and also there is not significant difference in the overall mental health of the students on the staying at their home or at hostel or at paying guest.

CONCLUSION :

The research was carried on to assess the mental health of the college students in the city of Ahmedabad. Majority of the students experienced significant academic stress. The students face various challenges such as balancing their academics and activities, time management and irregular sleep patterns. The alarming finding is with respect to engagement in the physical activity by the students. Around 52% of the students engage in the physical activity for less than 2 hours and only 12% of the students engage in physical activity for more than six hours during the week. This adds to their stress which adversely affects their mental health and well-being. Gender has a significant association with almost all the parameters measured for stress and anxiety and Place of stay do not have any significant association with any of the parameters measured for stress and anxiety. There is a significant difference in the overall health of male and female students. The mean values suggest that the male students have a better overall mental health and well-being.

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