

STUDY OF PSYCHOLOGICAL STRESS, ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION AMONG FEMALE STUDENTS OF GC WOMEN UNIVERSITY FAISALABAD PAKISTAN (GCWUF)

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ABSTRACT

Background: To identify the risk factors of stress, anxiety and depression among university female students in Faisalabad. **Objective:** To determine the prevalence of stress, anxiety and depression, among undergraduate female students in Govt college women university Faisalabad (GCWUF). **Study design:** Descriptive cross-sectional. **Setting:** Women university Faisalabad. **Period:** Dec 2017 to Feb 2018. **Material and Method:** The study was carried out on 125 students. Semi-structured stress, Anxiety and depression questionnaire was used to obtain the data. Data processed and analyzed in SPSS. **Results:** The result of the study on, Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS) shows the different levels of stress, (49.6% mild, 33.6% moderate and 10.2% severe), Anxiety (49.7% mild, 37.5% moderate and 7.7% severe) and depression (59.7% mild, 26.3% moderate and 8.3% severe) levels. The level of stress, anxiety and depression were positively associated with the demographic variables, academic and personal factors. **Conclusion:** As the results showed, sociodemographic, academic and personal factors are significantly associated with stress, anxiety and depression. Adolescents can be prevented from getting into psychological disability, morbidity and mortality by devising strategies for student's mental health and addressing the identified risk factors.

Key words: Stress, Anxiety, Depression, Female.

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INTRODUCTION

Disorders that effect mood, behavior and thinking refer to a wide range of illness are called as mental health disorders. Different type of addictive, behaviors, schizophrenia, anxiety, and mental depression, psychological stress that effect the nervous of human beings are some examples of mental illness.¹

One of the leading causes of failure and disability among students is mental health disorders.² According to world health organization (WHO), poor mental health is connected with certain reasons such as stressful work conditions, social exclusion, and rapid social change, and gender discrimination, risk of violence, unhealthy

lifestyle and violation to human rights. Transition of being a university student from a high school student is very challenging and stressful as well; so, there is a high risk for mental illness among university students.³

In comparison to general population, mental health issues such as: anxiety, psychosis, depression, suicidal thoughts, behavioral disturbance, use of psychiatric medications, mood swings, addictions and other chronic psychiatric disorders are high among university students.^{4,5} Studies have indicated that the prevalence is particularly high among female students as compared to male students.⁶

Because of anxiety, depression, maladjustment in stressful university environment, more than 60% of university students are unable to complete their studies and left without finishing being graduate.⁷ Many factors such as high expectation of good result and performance from self, teachers, parents and other family members, financial constraints, highly competent peers, excessive burden of academic studies, volume of material to be learned, evaluation (examination and continuous assessment) and hindrances in reaching their desired success target in studies contributes to stress among university students.⁸ In all this they have very less or no time for their extracurricular activities and hobbies. This high level of stress among university students can have serious and chronic long-term effect on their academic performance and quality of life.⁹

Increased level of anxiety and depression has been analyzed among academically less successful students. According to reports continuous negative effects of emotional stress on students include poor performance in classroom and examination, brain and psychological disorders induced by excessive stress, anxiety and depression.¹⁰ In different universities around the world (Thailand, Malaysia, Canada, and Britannia, USA) prevalence of stress and depression have been reported.¹¹ It is vital that stress, anxiety and depression in undergraduate students are pertinently assessed and strategies are devised to facilitate them cope with it. The aim of this study was to determine the frequency of stress, anxiety and depression in undergraduate university female students in a public sector university in Faisalabad.

The present study aimed to identify the

- (1) prevalence of depression and anxiety and depression
- (2) relationship between demographic variables and levels of stress, depression and anxiety,
- (3) Effect of academic factors variables at stress,

anxiety and depression

- (4) Effect of personal factors variables at stress, anxiety and depression

MATERIAL AND METHODS

A cross sectional study conducted at govt. college for women university Faisalabad (GCWF). A structured questionnaire was used for data collection about socio-demographic characteristics and potential risk factors related to stress, anxiety and depression among under graduate students. A total of 125 undergraduate students participated in this study. Depression Anxiety Stress Scale was utilized to determine the stress, anxiety and depression level. The analysis of the data was done with Windows SPSS version 21. The integrity, consistency and lost values of the data were evaluated. Studies have shown that the DASS 21 score have validity in the measurement of the degree of depression, anxiety and stress in the person. It also has high reliability in terms of usage in a clinical and non-clinical setting.^{12,13}

RESULTS

Table 1. Demographic and socio-economic characteristics.

| Description | Frequency |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|
| Age | |
| 18-20 | 96 (76.8%) |
| 21-23 | 29 (23.2%) |
| Current living arrangement | |
| Family | 114 (91.2%) |
| Hostel | 11 (8.8%) |
| Residence prior to joining university | |
| Urban | 91 (72.8%) |
| Rural | 34 (27.2%) |
| Arrangement for paying fee | |
| Scholarship | 15 (12%) |
| Parents | 108 (86.4%) |
| Tuitions | 02 (1.6%) |
| Reason for choosing this institution | |
| Self-interest | 48 (38.4%) |
| Parents | 77 (61.6%) |
| Availability of counseling service | |
| Yes | 21 (16.8%) |
| No | 104 (83.2%) |

| | |
|----------------------------------|-----------|
| Who provides counseling service? | |
| Faculty | 25(20%) |
| Administrative staff | 09(7.2%) |
| None | 91(72.8%) |

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of demographic and socioeconomic factors among respondents. The table shows that total numbers of respondent were 125. The maximum respondent belong from the age group 18-20 years (76.8%). 91.2% students live with family while 8.8% reside in hostel. 86.8% students are dependent on parents for management of university fee. 61.6% have influence of parents for choosing this institution. According to table majority says there is no counseling service available (83.2%). 20 % are of view faculty is helpful in their problems. While according to 7.2% students it is administrative staff who are providing counseling service.

Table 2. Academic factors effect on stress, anxiety and depression

| Description | Frequency |
|--|------------|
| Pressure of studies | 100 (80%) |
| Pressure of passing exams | 105(84%) |
| Pressure of fulfilling family expectations | 92(73.6%) |
| Fear of stepping into the real world | 77(61.6%) |
| Dissatisfaction with administration | 73(58.4%) |
| Dissatisfaction with examination criteria | 93(74.4%) |
| Cluelessness about future choices of specialty | 105(84.7%) |
| Increase class workload | 107(86.3%) |
| Low grade | 53(42.3%) |
| Many hours of study | 84(67.2%) |
| Missing lectures | 69(55.6%) |
| Frustration due to misunderstanding lectures | 95(76.7%) |

In this study, among 125 respondents, most of the mreported many determinant factors that trigger students' level of stress, anxiety and depression (Table 2). List of reasons: pressure of studies(80%), pressure of passing exams (84%), pressure of fulfilling family expectations (73.6%), fear of stepping into new world (61.6%), dissatisfaction with administration (58.4%), dissatisfaction with examination criteria (74.4%), cluelessness about future choices of specialty

(84.7%), increase class workload (86.3%), low grade (42.3%), many hours of study (67.2%), Missing lectures(55.6%) and Frustration due to misunderstanding lectures (76.7%) were frequently reported source of stress among university female students respectively.

Table 3. Personal factors effect on stress, anxiety and depression

| Description | Frequency |
|------------------------------|------------|
| Combining job with studies | 21 (16.9%) |
| Change in living environment | 84(65.3%) |
| Change in sleeping pattern | 89(71.8%) |
| New responsibilities | 82(66.1%) |
| Financial difficulties | 60(48.4%) |
| Health problems | 84(67.2%) |
| Poor eating habits | 105(83.9%) |

Table 3. shows the personal factors as a source of stress. Poor eating habits had the biggest percentage of 83.9%, followed by change in sleeping pattern with 71.8%, health problems came next with 67.2%, along with new responsibilities 66.1%, change in living environments 65.3% also had significant effect on stress anxiety and depression levels, and the last two were financial difficulties and combining jobs with studies having 48.4% and 16.9% respectively.

Table 4. Prevalence of stress, anxiety and depression among undergraduates

| Variables | Number (%) |
|------------|------------|
| Stress | |
| Normal | 8(6.62%) |
| Mild | 62(49.6%) |
| Moderate | 42(33.6%) |
| Severe | 13(10.2%) |
| Anxiety | |
| Normal | 6(5.1%) |
| Mild | 63(49.7%) |
| Moderate | 47(37.5%) |
| Severe | 9(7.7%) |
| Depression | |
| Normal | 7(5.7%) |
| Mild | 74(59.7%) |
| Moderate | 34(26.3%) |
| Severe | 10(8.3%) |

Table 4. shows the prevalence of stress, anxiety and depression among undergraduates. Stress, anxiety and Depression, are divided into 4 categories, which are normal, mild, moderate and severe. In stress 6.6% of the respondents are normal while 49.6%, 33.6%, and 10.2% of the respondents have mild, moderate and severe stress respectively. For the anxiety status, 5.1% of the respondents are free from it while the rest, ranging from 49.7% to 37.5% have mild to severe anxiety. Moreover, 5.7% of the respondents do not have any depression. Those who are with mild level of stress consist of 59.7%, followed by moderate level of depression (26.3%) and lastly severe level of depression (8.3%).

DISCUSSION

Among university student's anxiety, stress, and depression are mostly not recognized nor treated. Often Due to embarrassment and taboo regarding mental health university students especially females rarely ask or pursue for professional medical help/assistance. Also, in major or most Pakistani universities there is no such guidance or an established department for student's mental help in case of different issues regarding stress, anxiety or depression. Due to this reason DASS scale among Pakistani undergraduate students and other Asian countries is significantly higher as compared to the students of western countries.

Level of depression (82.4%) reported in 2020 among students of University of Bangladesh was quite high in 202014 as compared to prevalence of depression only 24% among students in the United Kingdom. In comparison, 57.6% of medical students reported to be depressed due to multiple reasons. Likewise in another study 60% and 43% medical students were having depression and anxiety levels in private and public institutes respectively.¹⁵ Multiple factors can be attributed to these ratios of higher incidence among students as per different studies. Pressure and high expectation of

achievements by Asian families, overburdening class and test schedules, Fear and pressure of passing exams and getting degree, hectic examination criteria and above all extreme pressure form parents to choose profession of their choice as per living in society, which is then followed by the need to live up to the family's expectations regarding students' academic performance.¹⁶

After finding the frequency of anxiety, stress, and depression among university students, the next step, is to recognize the factors that lead to mental health issues among students. This can be done by appointment of student and professional health counselors that can help to identify the root cause problems causing stress, anxiety and depression among students, such as academic and social and factors as source of fear and pressure, frustration, emotional disturbance and sudden mood change etc. if these factors are detected at early stages of stress and depression then this can help students from surrendering to distressing psychological issues. If these issues are not reported or treated in time and left unattended will ultimately leads to severe outcomes including attempts to suicide.^{17,18}

Regarding stress, anxiety and depression management, awareness programs, conducting work shops along with counselors and health services regarding mental state in universities of Pakistan will encourage and provide male and especially female graduate students necessary knowledge and understanding about DAS (depression, anxiety and stress), and it will also help them, to deal and cope with it. Although academic workload of university in different examination fields, pressure of clearing semesters of graduation with good grades is essential and inevitable; nevertheless, with the help of professional counselors and teacher's university female students should be enabled to sustain their academic life with balance mental health.

CONCLUSION

As the results showed, socio demographic, academic and personal factors are significantly associated with stress, anxiety and depression. Youngsters can be prohibited from getting into psychological debility, indisposition and impermanence by devising strategies for student's mental health and addressing the identified risk factors.

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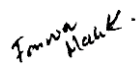
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AUTHORSHIP AND CONTRIBUTION DECLARATION

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| 1 | Qamar Yasmeen | Writing of manuscript, statistical analysis |  |
| 2 | Nighat Yasmeen | Proof reading, Discussion, Conclusion |  |
| 3 | Farwa Malik | Data collection, literature review |  |