

## ORIGINAL ARTICLE

# PREVALENCE OF STRESS AND COPING STRATEGIES AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

Anil Jain<sup>1</sup>, Sandeep Verma<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Associate Professor, Integral Institute of Medical Sciences and Research, Lucknow, U.P, India

<sup>2</sup>Associate Professor, Mayo Institute of Medical Sciences, Barabanki, U.P, India

### ABSTRACT:

**Background:** College students are exposed to a considerable amount of stress, which necessitate successful and constantly changing coping strategy. The aim of this study is to evaluate the prevalence of stress among students of colleges. **Materials & Methods:** This study is based on graduate students of 4 different colleges. It included 550 students, 260 males and 290 females. A self structures questionnaire was prepared on three sections. The first section comprising of demographic information, the second section is a set of questions on academic, emotional, social, and financial stressors and the last section includes the statements on positive and negative coping. Questionnaire was filled by students. **Results:** The present study comprised of 550 students (male- 260, female- 290). Among all, family expectations were the most both in males (52%) and females (50%). Competition was other stress level in all, male (25%) and females (29%). Other stress level was teacher expectation and excessive work load. The social stressors included were attending social events, trouble getting along with a family member, having no friends. 20% of males and 27% of females were having trouble getting along with family members, 15% males and 10% females had no friends. Social stress was not a concern for most of the participants. **Conclusion:** Author concluded that academic stress was highly correlated with social and financial stress. Positive coping strategies like meditation, prayer and sleep was found to be very helpful in dealing stress. Negative coping strategies were drug use, smoking, use of social media and alcoholism.

**Key Words:** Stress, Positive coping strategies, Negative coping strategies

Corresponding Author: Dr. Anil Jain, Associate Professor, Integral Institute of Medical Sciences and Research, Lucknow, U.P, India

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## INTRODUCTION

Stress is the “wear and tear” our bodies experience as we adjust to our continually changing environment; it has physical and emotional effects and can create positive or negative influence on us.<sup>1</sup>

As a positive influence, stress can help to compel us for action. As a negative influence, it can result in feelings of distress, rejection, anger, and depression, which in turn can lead to health problems.<sup>2</sup>

Hormones are released to prepare the body for action. The heartbeat increases and blood pressure rises. More blood flow to the heart and the major muscles. Flow is diverted away from “less important” areas such as the digestive system. Nausea is often experienced during stress.<sup>3</sup> Other illness believed to be caused by stress includes angina,

asthma, cancer, cystitis, depression, diabetes, diarrhoea, heart attack, migraine, psoriasis rheumatoid arthritis, and ulcers. Partial loss of body hair (alopecia areata) or even total loss of all body hair (alopecia universalis) can also result from stress.<sup>4</sup>

College life is one of the most scintillating and memorable experiences in an adolescent’s life. It is in college that an adolescent enjoys the vibrant environment, the company of friends and the various academic and co-curricular activities, which enriches nurtures and henceforth prepares the adolescent for adulthood.<sup>5</sup>

College students are exposed to a considerable amount of stress, which necessitate successful and constantly changing coping strategy. These stressors include internal and external pressures exerted by the environment to thrive

and succeed, overcome economic hardships, worries about vague futures, societal problems and opportunities.<sup>6</sup> Studies revealed that students experience a relatively high level of personal distress, with adverse consequences on academic performance, competency, professionalism, and health.<sup>7</sup>

The aim of this study is to evaluate the prevalence of stress among students of colleges.

**MATERIALS & METHODS**

This study is based on graduate students of 4 different colleges. It included 550 students, 260 males and 290 females. A self structures questionnaire was prepared on three sections. The first section comprising of demographic information, the second section is a set of questions on academic, emotional, social, and financial stressors and the last section includes the statements on positive and negative coping. Questionnaire was filled by students. Results thus obtained were subjected to statistical analysis using SPSS version 20.0. P value less than 0.05 was considered statistical significant.

**RESULTS**

The present study comprised of 550 students (male- 260, female- 290). Most of females (150) and males (120) were coming from their home. 150 males and 130 females were hostellite. 11 males and 15 females were married while 5 males and 3 females were divorced. 90% male and 75%

female parents were literate. 10% male and 25% female parents were illiterate. The difference was significant (P-0.05). Most of the students (438/550) had less than 5 siblings (Table I).

Table II shows various stress levels in students. Among all, family expectations were the most both in males (52%) and females (50%). Competition was other stress level in all, male (25%) and females (29%). Other stress level was teacher expectation and excessive work load.

The social stressors included were attending social events, trouble getting along with a family member, having no friends. 20% of males and 27% of females were having trouble getting along with family members, 15% males and 10% females had no friends. Social stress was not a concern for most of the participants (Graph I).

Graph II shows that females had significantly higher emotional stress % than males such as romantic relations, feeling lonely and anxious. Financial stress % was significantly higher in males as compared to females such as money spent, mobile and vehicle expenses.

Meditation and talking to parents was most common positive strategies followed by sleep, listening music and yoga/ exercise in both males and females. The difference was non significant (p- 0.2). (Graph III)

Graph IV shows that using social network was significantly more in females than males (P- 0.01). Use of alcohol, smoking and alcoholism was more in males than females.

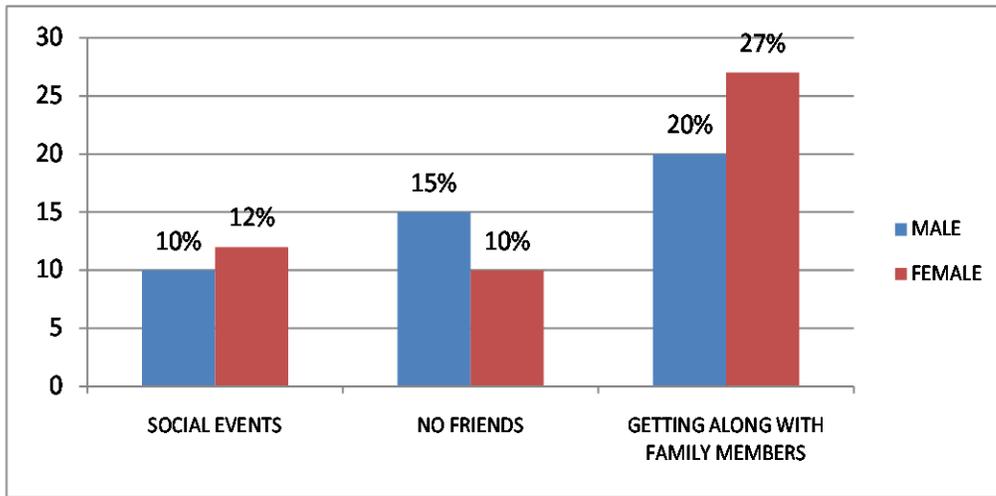
**TABLE I:** Demographic data of patients

Total - 550				
	Gender	Male	Female	P Value
	Number	260	290	0.2
Residence	Home	120	150	0.4
	Hostel	150	130	0.3
Marital Status	Married	11	15	0.1
	Divorced	5	3	1
Parents Literacy Rate	Literate	90%	75%	0.2
	Illiterate	10%	25%	0.05
Siblings	<5	208	230	0.2
	>5	52	60	0.3

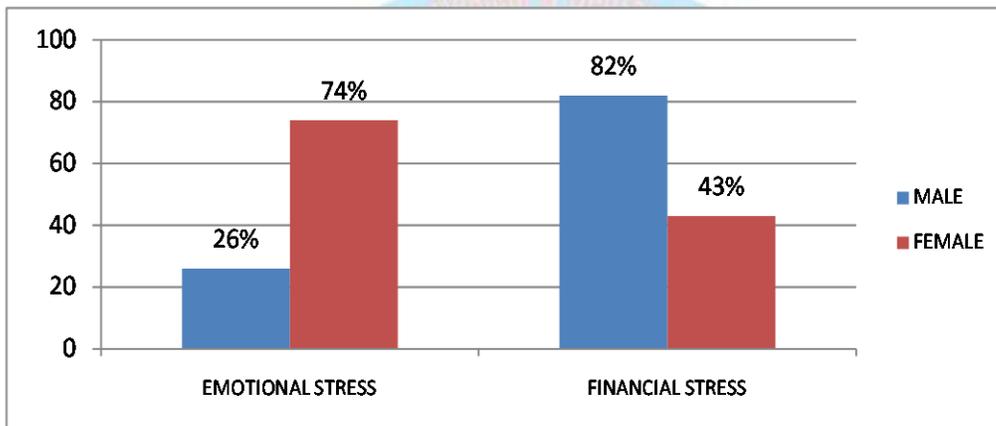
**TABLE II:** Academic stress in students

	Male %	Female %
Family Expectation	52	50
Teacher Expectation	15	11
Competition	25	29
Excessive Work Load	9	10

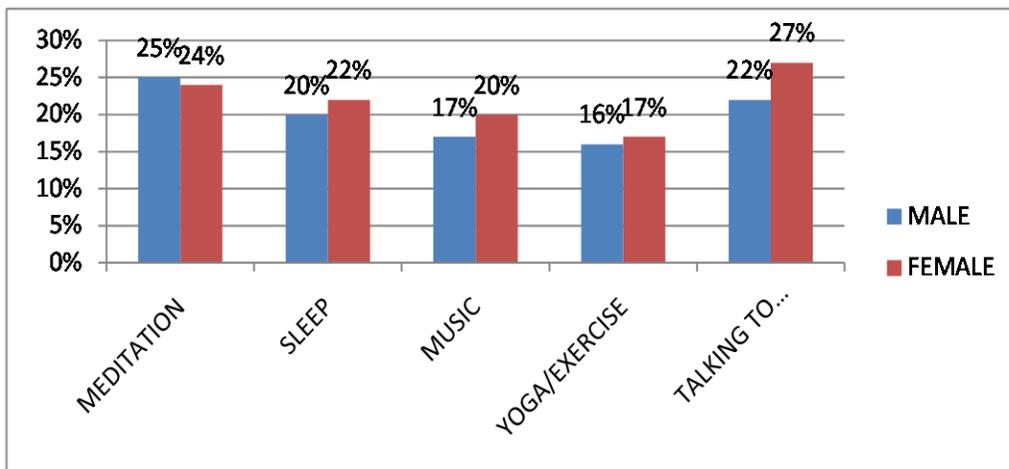
**GRAPH I:** Level of social stress in students



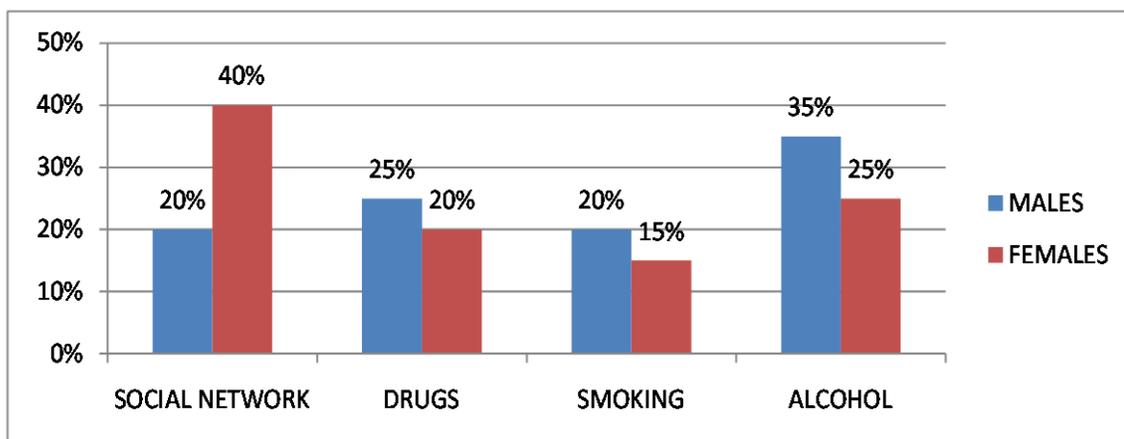
**GRAPH II:** Emotional and financial stress



**GRAPH III:** Positive coping strategies



**GRAPH IV:** Negative coping strategies



**DISCUSSION**

Although some degree of stress is accepted as a normal part and can be a motivator for some individuals, not all students find the stress manageable. Stress may give rise to feelings of fear, incompetence, uselessness, anger, and guilt and has been associated with both psychological and physical disorders.<sup>8</sup> College students often meet their future partners in college, hand in hand they also require preparation and focus to perform well in home works and tests in various subjects and disciplines, consequently they very often face inconsistent outcomes. Therefore ineffective coping can lead to anxiety, drinking problems, depression and a multitude of other mental health problems amongst college students.<sup>9</sup> The issue of stress among college and university students has been in focus for several years. Elevated stress levels amongst students can result in a decline in the academic accomplishments, and can affect both the physical and mental health of students. Therefore, studies on coping with stress will have a significant impact in higher education. Despite the fact that the news broadcast college preparatory high schools as the main sources of pressure and stress, more studies are needed as not many experimental studies have been conducted with students in these settings.<sup>10</sup>

In present study, most of females and males were day scholar. 11 males and 15 females were married while 5 males and 3 females were divorced. 90% male and 75% female parents were literate. 10% male and 25% female parents were illiterate. The difference was significant (P-0.05). Most of the students (438/550) had less than 5 siblings. This indicates that day scholars had may have additional benefit of being attached with parents. Number of siblings also play important role in stress level. Our results are in agreement with the results of Greenberg et al.<sup>11</sup>

In our study academic stress was seen mostly in students. Social stress was also one of the stress in students. Emotional stress was more in females and financial stress

was more in males. Similar results are seen in various studies.<sup>12,13</sup>

Meditation and talking to parents was most common positive strategies followed by sleep, listening music and yoga/ exercise in both males and females. Social network was significantly more in females than males (P- 0.01). Use of alcohol, smoking and alcoholism was more in males than females. Similar results are seen in various studies.<sup>14, 15</sup>

**CONCLUSION**

Author concluded that academic stress was highly correlated with social and financial stress. Positive coping strategies like meditation, prayer and sleep was found to be very helpful in dealing stress. Negative coping strategies were drug use, smoking, use of social media and alcoholism.

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