

Stress among College Students Amid Covid-19 Crisis

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Abstract - Introduction - Collegiate confront unique challenges in the midst of Covid-19 pandemic related to their mental health through the swift rise of worry, fear, stress, and anxiety among student is a concerning segment of society. This study is carried out to assess the level of stress among college male and female students due to this Corona Pandemic outburst with the factors influencing and stressors associated with the level of stress. Methodology - The target population was students from undergraduate and post-graduate colleges & Universities with a cross-sectional study design. Data analysis was done by IBM SPSS version 26.0. Findings - Due to the Covid-19 pandemic a mild followed by moderate & severe levels of stress were experienced by the students. A positive relation had been associated with collegiate academic delay issues, factors associated with the stressors, and GAD scale with the stress. The sample cross-tabulation depicts that level of stress is faced more by females as compared to males. The overall reliability is observed as 0.685. Conclusion - Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown both play a significant role in increasing stress levels among students with stressors being an aggravating factor. To promote stress resilience and their basic needs students should adapt to coping strategies. An initiative should be taken as a responsibility by an individual, institution, and society to overcome those mental issues.

Key Words: (SARS : Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome; WHO : World Health Organization; GAD : Generalized Anxiety disorder; NGO : Non-government Organization)

1. INTRODUCTION

The story of the novel Corona had originated during the end month of December 2019 a virus from the Corona family of SARS & MARS emerged as an outburst by the name novel Coronavirus appeared in the capital of Hubei province in the city of Wuhan, China. In the meantime, the temporary migration of Chinese people makes the novel Corona outbreak ubiquitous within a month involved approximately 188 countries of the world [1]. Novel Corona was epidemic in its initial stage though the confirmed cases are known from December 2019 China government enlighten it on 20th January 2020.

Corona is a big family of viruses from a corona viridae family & it has another name (SARS-Cov). The name corona virus emerged from the Latin word corona meaning "Crown or halo" and due to its large bulgy coronal shape with a spike-like protrusion or hump around it which appears like a crown. The spike on the surface of the virus is proteins to infect cells of organisms. So spike, envelope, membrane & nucleoid are the protein which accord with the corona virus structure. Corona virus can survive in airways for few hours and adhesive easily with the skin & can enter through the eyes, mouth, nose, trachea and enters lungs where virus sticks to the cell, multiply and affects the respiratory system [2]. It is believed that the outbreak of this virus is due to illegal wildlife by the Chinese in the city of Wuhan [3].

Not long ago, an akin epidemic was faced ubiquitously, SARS (Severe acute respiratory syndrome) was considered as the first-ever global of the 21st century & was originated in Hong Kong city of China. In 2003, there was an outburst of SARS in China and associated with the mental hazards of health consequences of anxiety & stress among Chinese individuals. At the time of SARS outburst, studies had been investigated on the salubrious groups of the society to know the psychical impact with revealing significant psychiatric morbidities which were found to be associated with youth & vulnerable sections of the society [4]. SARS was a short-lived pandemic & social distancing policy was a preventive measure during that time period. Though the dormancy of globally SARS was quickly identified by WHO & various adoptive measures involved with the deployment of volunteers to control the situation worldwide effectively.

Novel Corona virus was officially declared new name as Covid-19 on 11 Feb 2020 by World Health Organization and on 11 March 2020, the n Covid-19 outbreak was characterized by WHO as a pandemic [1]. On April 22, the WHO's director-general said the virus "will be with us for a long time", pointing to the early stages of outbreaks in some countries, and an uptick of cases in others [5].

Youth are a special group among the population who used to be under pressure in normal circumstances but an outbreak can increase the burden of pressure by developing psychological imbalance & uncontrolled emotion as overthinking, worry,

anxiety, and panic situation is general circumstances which arouse due to epidemic. Psychologist worked from decades how a human perceives threaten to themselves and they overreact to pandemic & other associated events & how it brings a stigma in individuals to overreact with that situation affecting their daily outcomes in this crisis [6]. Globally outbreak or epidemic both arise due to psychological imbalance which develops a stressful state. During stressful the mind act & behave differently, the way of thinking & behavior pattern adapts a change & if the individual can't cope up with this stressful condition than it turned into depression & anxiety which influenced individual with their day to day activity, work & social groups [7].

2. OBJECTIVES :

- 1) To determine the association of level of stress between male and female students.
- 2) To determine an association between stressors and level of stress among students.
- 3) A correlation study between the GAD scale and level of stress gives a measure to estimate stress among students.

3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Stress word is originated from the Latin word "sting" meaning "to be drawn tight". Medical terminology described it as "a stimulus which acts predisposing element results with alteration in a physiological and psychological imbalance which lead to deterioration in health with perspective signs & symptoms [8]. Studies aim at Stress & anxiety prevalence with the associated contributing factors & its outcome.

"Social distancing" has been replaced by "physical distancing" by WHO so that individuals may not feel secluded & debarred from society. Earlier studies had already focused that living alone or loneliness feeling is a predisposing element of psychological distress. Individuals far from their family due to work, study, or other reasons are more chances of suffering from stress and anxiety. As geriatric care is more concerned as a secluded element but pandemic crisis makes everyone feel isolated so from a different section of society this study focus on Stress and anxiety on student's elements issues [9]. There are few studies done on Covid-19 which describes the psychological outcomes on an individual at different aspect related to workplace or academic based on covid-19 but there were previous studies which reflect the psychological status during the outbreak of epidemic & imbalanced after the elimination of epidemic.

The pandemic outburst with locked-down is problematic to individuals including social distant as a preventive measure to combat the disease, online mode of studies are a new way of demanding task for many of them. Such conditions with the change in their routine activity are associated with chaos in learned parity. This results in enhancement of mental equilibrium, lack of insufficiency with those altered mechanism results in a psychological disorder of stress and anxiety due to change in their day to day activity [10].

A student used to interact daily with their friends and other people but suddenly a disastrous situation of an epidemic with isolation influenced the day to day life. Psychological aspects cover the continuum dimension in which it covers "perfect health wellbeing" while other aspects are "mental chaos" [11]. Psychological upset is associated with lack of interest in day to day activity and is described as emotionally annoying, fearful, angry, or swinging of mood disturbing their functioning personal activity. Lack of attention, Lack of appetite, morose, insomnia, etc. are a few examples during a stressful situation. Every person bears a different level of stress with different associated factors. The ubiquity of fear, worry, and anxiety for a longer period flourishes a psychic disorder. Anxiety, depression, alcohol dependency are not associated with the Covid-19 but isolation, social distance & locked down in a particular place for a longer period had created an adverse impact [10].

Covid-19 apart from the physical aspect affects wellbeing in deterioration of its mental tonicity. As it's our mind if works efficiently it can combat the battle of any outburst effectively. In this regards college, institution and universities should come forward and reinforce students about the proper understanding regarding the biological catastrophe and how to tackle it's mentally by knowledge and awareness among individuals & students by fulfilling want & concern of mental health status by keeping it healthy from the psychological disorders [1].

4. METHODOLOGY

Study Population & Sample -

A cross-sectional study design was adopted as per this research and the target population was students from undergraduate and post-graduate colleges and Universities. The time frame of the questionnaire was 15 days (i.e. from 23 April 2020 to 07

May 2020) and the Covid-19 pandemic crisis was at a peak level during the studies. 416 students responded to the questionnaire & were included in the analysis part.

Data collection -

The data collection process was conducted through an online platform by google forms. The questionnaire was distributed to the University Students and other college students and was told to pass it to other students. Research Questionnaire assured authenticity and confidentiality with the questionnaire.

Research Questionnaire & Rating Instruments -

As studies are concerned with stress among students so the questionnaire was framed with Covid-19 related conditions. Structured packets of the questionnaire were framed based on demographic information in age, gender, residing state, family steady income including cognition behavior questions like (1) Are you staying with your family during this lock-down (2) Is your closed relative or any acquaintance infected with covid-19? (3) Do you have corona positive cases in your city or neighbor if yes then because of covid-19 are you really stress? (4) Is your day to day activity really affected by lock-down & one of the reasons for your stress? (5) Are low socio-economic groups getting social support from the government in this crisis? (As some students belong to low socioeconomic status) including social support during this outburst of Covid-19.

Factors and stressors related questions on the economy, influence on life, academic & social support were (1) worry about economy Influence? (2) stress-related to academics? (3) Worry about influences on daily/hostel life (Food, Medicine, etc.) (4) Is debarred from social interaction a kind of stress being a student? (5) Is maintaining a social distance from the nearby people is also distressing elements?

Generalized anxiety disorders scale (GAD) a self-rated scale developed by Spitzer and colleagues (2006) as a screening tool and severity indicator [12]. To assess mental health status GAD with 7 symptoms of questions perceived by respondents within a month during locked in. GAD questionnaire consist of (1) Feeling nervous, anxiety or on edge (2) Not being able to stop or control worrying (3) Worrying too much about different things (4) Trouble relaxing (5) Being so restless that it is hard to sit still (6) Becoming easily annoyed or irritable (7) Feeling afraid of awful might happen and rating of GAD was based on Likert scale ranging from Not at all (1), Several days (2), More than half days (3), Nearly every days (4). GAD is one of the best measuring instrument for diagnosing and screening in clinical practice one of the valid instrument to assess its consistency [13] and the last question was - what do you feel the level of stress is being faced by you from the overall response was also based on Likert later on rating Normal (1), Mild (2), Moderate (3), Severe (4). [++++]

Pre-processing Procedure -

At the time of collection of data, there were no missing values found but duplicate values were part of it which were removed simultaneously while some of the columns were deleted based on timestamp, email id, place of residence questionnaire related to economy and their degrees. Data are converted into Nominal & ordinal scales.

Data Analysis -

The estimation of data analysis was done by IBM SPSS version 26.0. A descriptive study approach was applied to assess demographic data through frequency & percentage. Cross tabulation tab to assess stress in genders. The measure of association as a parametric test was applied to test the level of stress and associations with the stressors & GAD.

Ethical Consideration-

All respondents were informed about the research study work purpose and were assured of the reliability & confidentiality of their data.

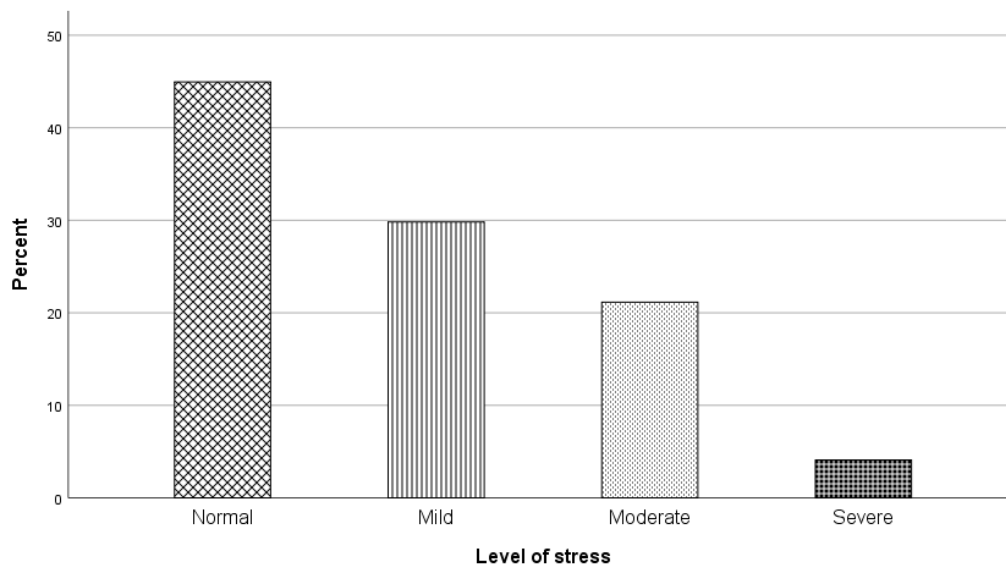
5. RESULTS

The result suggested that the study had an encounter with stressors based on worry about Academic delay, worry about influences and social life, and worry about any acquaintance infected with Covid-19 affecting the mental health status of both graduates & Post-graduates students. The Mean age of the respondent (\bar{x}) is 23.35 and the standard deviation (σ) of 3.119, this indicates that the respondent is focused over 20 to 26 years. The level of stress faced by the sample is 45.0% (187) Normal

followed by 29.8% (124) Mild, 21.2% (88) Moderate, and 4.1% (17) Severe (Table 1.0). So it is cleared that a mild, moderate & severe level of stress is experienced by the students due to Covid-19 on which this research study focused along with the influencing factors.

Table 1.0: Level of Stress faced by respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Normal	187	45.0	45.0
Mild	124	29.8	74.8
Moderate	88	21.2	95.9
Severe	17	4.1	100.0



Graph 1.0 Level of Stress faced by respondents

Table 2.0 shows a matrix on demographic variables of the respondent’s characteristics. It can be observed that among participants 51.7% (215) were females & 48.3% (201) were males. In terms of Education, 50.2% (209) were male and 49.8% (207) were female. The participants living with family is 90.9% (378) and 9.1% (38) don’t live with their family. In terms of participants acquaintance infected with Covid-19 were 4.8% (20) and 95.2% (395) don’t get infected. Rural-urban participants 46.9% (195) are stressed due to positive cases in their city among which 36.5% (152) are from urban and 16.6% (69) are from rural places.

Table 2.0 Demographic profiles

Variable	Characteristics	Frequency
Gender	Male	201 (48.3)
	Female	215 (51.7)
Education	Male	209 (50.2)
	Female	207 (49.2)

Living with family	Yes	378 (90.9)
	No	38 (9.1)
Relative of acquaintance infected with Covid-19	Yes	20 (4.8)
	No	395 (95.2)
Stress due to positive cases in a region	Urban	152 (36.5)
	Urban-Rural	195 (46.9)
	Rural	69 (16.6)

Table 3.0 depicts that 43.5% (181) of collegiate suffers from the worry of not getting job followed by 27.9% (116) suffers from the worry of delay in academic followed by 14.6% (62) worry of delay in exam & results, 8.4% (35) suffers from the worry about new methods of online teaching while 5.3% (22) have others concern related to stress. So it is cleared that college students suffer from different spectrum of stress which involved various parameters.

Table 3.0 Academic delay

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Worry about not getting a job	181	43.5	43.5
Worry about a delay in academic	116	27.9	71.4
Worry of delay in exam & results	62	14.9	86.3
Worry about new methods of online teaching	35	8.4	94.7
Others	22	5.3	100.0

The respondent’s cross-tabulation depicts that there is a significant difference in the level of stress faced due to positive cases in a region. Table 4.0 imply that normal and mild level of stress is faced more by rural-urban as compared to urban followed by rural while moderate & severe level of stress is faced more by urban as compared to rural-urban followed by rural. So it can be interpreted that participants living in rural areas are less stressed as compared to rural-urban & Urban regions.

Table 4.0: Level of stress faced by Respondents * Stress due to positive cases in a region: Cross tabulation Count

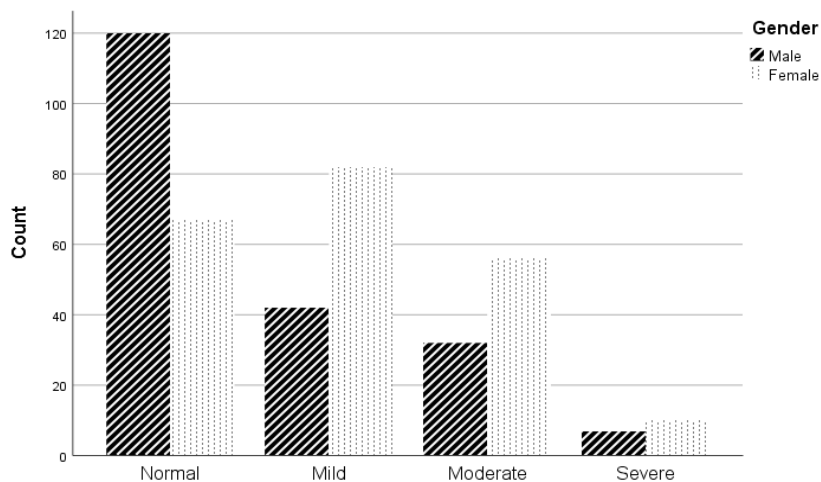
		Level of stress faced by respondents			
		Normal	Mild	Moderate	Severe
Stress due to positive cases in a region	Urban	49 (32.24%)	50 (32.89%)	43 (28.29%)	10 (6.58%)
	Rural-urban	102 (52.31%)	57 (29.23%)	30 (15.38%)	6 (3.08%)
	Rural	36 (52.17%)	17 (24.64%)	15 (21.74%)	1 (1.45%)

The respondent’s cross-tabulation depicts that there is a significant difference in the level of stress faced by Male and Female genders. Table 5.0 imply that mild, moderate & severe level of stress is more faced by a female as compared to males while the normal level of stress is faced by a male as compared to females.

Table 5.0: Level of stress faced by Respondents * Gender Cross tabulation Count

	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	

Normal	120	67	187
Mild	42	82	124
Moderate	32	56	88
Severe	7	10	17
Total	201	215	416



Graph 2.0: Level of stress faced by respondents

A Correlation study had been observed between routine & social life influenced by lock-down with different parameters for stress and it was found that a positive correlation had been estimated for worry about influences & social distancing and negative correlation is observed with the level of stress at 0.01 level of significance (2-tailed) (Table 6.0). So from the below results, it can be interpreted that level of stress is associated with the stressors and shows a strong strength between the factors associated with it. The previous studies focused on stressors with the anxiety level with correlation and P values [1] while this study focused on stressors with stress level correlation & 2-tailed test.

Table 6.0: Correlations with stressors

		Worry about influences	Social life influenced by Lock-down	Social distant is distressing due to Covid-19	Level of stress faced by the respondents
Routine Life affected by Lock-down	Pearson Correlation	.149**	.300**	.222**	-.252**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	.000	.000	.000

		Worry about influences	Social distant is distressing due to Covid-19	Level of stress faced by the respondents
Social life influenced by Lock-down	Pearson Correlation	.245**	.348**	-.248**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

A correlation had been observed to the generalized anxiety disorders (GAD) scale and level of stress faced by respondents. GAD scale is used to measure anxiety symptoms disorder in clinical practice by psychopaths and considered as the reliable & feasible approach primary care tools utilize as screening, diagnosing & assessing the anxiety, panic & stress disorders. GAD can estimate a psychometric test with a large sample of population-related to individual mood swings and anxiety states [2]. Table

7.0 implies a positive correlation had been observed between the stress and GAD scale at 0.01 level of significance (2-tailed). It can be elucidated with the results that GAD gives an association with the level of stress, however, a previous study with GAD scale was done on Cronbach's a tool [3], and this study was done on Correlation and level of significance which even gives appropriate results.

Table 7.0: Correlations with GAD & Level of Stress faced by respondents

		Feeling nervous, anxiety or on edge	Not being able to stop worry	Worrying too much about different things	Trouble relaxing	Restless to sit still	Becoming easily annoyed or irritable	Feeling afraid of awful might happen
Level of stress faced by the respondents	Pearson Correlation	.433**	.489**	.441**	.387**	.295**	.344**	.378**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The reliability analysis gives the Cronbach's α value of .875 for GAD scale and level of stress & for stressors like worry about influences and worry about delay in academic & social support is .548. This indicates that the reliability of our study is excellent for GAD scale and average reliability for stressors. The overall reliability of this study is observed as .685.

6. DISCUSSION

Studies had recommended that epidemic implies well-being emergencies and has many psychological issues on collegiate students in the form of fret, panic, worry, distress. This study aimed to assess the stress stage during an epidemic on male and female college students with the factors influencing and the stressors associated with the level of stress. The studies revealed that Covid-19 outbursts had shot up stress levels among students. It had been observed that the epidemic laid Stress, as a panic situation profoundly among college genders among which females count higher than male students which states that females stress coping competency is low as compared to males. The previous studies even depicted the psychological condition in the form of worry, panic & fear profound more on females than males which reveal that females are a more susceptible character [1].

A positive correlation had been depicted between stressors and the level of stress. Similar studies had been done on Chinese college students in addition to economic stressors which disclose that steady family income is also a contributing factor to anxiety [1]. Other similar studies (Kernan 2019) implied that the epidemic plays a significant role in the economy of the country as well as in a person's life as due to disturbance in the economy the individuals lose their earning source and students stress about college fees (Peng et al., 2012) [14].

The studies focused on the level of stress faced by college students due to pandemic Covid-19 with the associated factors while prior studies focused on academic stress in a distinct year of students related to environmental stressors & personal factors. Fear of failure had been the stress factors for first and second-year students while final-year students had stress for future employment. So stress is one of the major factors as concern for society as it is prevailing globally among students, a positive approach should be implemented on psychological aspects[6].

Many countries had temporarily terminated the educational institutions to curb the expansion of Covid-19. The closure of educational institutes had created a 91% negative impact among students globally. WHO suggested many countries to follow the steps of social & physical distancing by preventing social gatherings to clog the flourish of Covid-19. Implementation of learning patterns via online mode is a major step to prevent mass gathering in a particular room. Online learning reduces contact between students to students and students to lectures thus preventing it to spread however online platforms didn't help students to do group work & assignments with their peer groups [9].

The previous study was done on MBA students to assess the anxiety, depression, and stress due to the recent outbreak which indicates students with depressions 43%, students with anxiety 16% and stress 11% with associated elements such as financial and economic issues, distress about future and social life and retraction of the job [15]. Covid-19 or any kind of pandemic

infection when it spreads among individuals than there is no disparity among races, caste, religiosity, society, ethics. A disease or infection doesn't look at people's origin & geographic area but creates physical and mental havoc among individuals.

7. CONCLUSIONS

An attempt is made to observed stress faced by students amidst of Covid-19 pandemic and about 29.8% of collegiate experienced a mild level of stress. It had been observed that among genders based females are more stressed than males. About 27.9% of college students are more worried about their future employment followed by the worry of delay in academic, exam & results. About 5.3% of them configure worry towards new methods of online teaching pattern & many of them face problems with connectivity especially students who live in a remote area [16]. Due to lockdown for a long time stress level among students has been increased significantly with stressors being an aggravating factor. In any catastrophe, themes of panic, anxiety, worry, unpredicted, and stigmatization customary act as a road blocker in the mental wellbeing of an individual.

Global health measures should be recruited to channel for the psychosocial stressors related to isolation/quarantine, social distancing, panic, worry, and anxiety are vulnerable in the society especially during the time of outbreaks of epidemics. Psychological Interventions must be given importance with the help of NGO & mental health professionals by educating the students about consequences, advising people to lower their exposure to negative news, promoting healthy behaviors, and preventing social isolation using alternative methods of the virtual network during this epidemic. (Banerjee 2020) [15].

The government should work in collaboration with schools and colleges for stress-related issues in this epidemic. Families, schools, colleges & society should help students to overcome such stress due to lockdown. The care, love, and psychological support can help to reduce mental pressure. Moreover, students can utilize their leisure time in upgrading their skills which can help them in upgrading their competency level and can enhance their positive aspects. Students can help of their own by coping strategies to fulfill their needs, desire & concern for themselves & others [17]. Meditation is good therapy for body, health & mind including deep breathing and relaxation technique is the best way to reduce the stress level of your life.

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