

Depression as a Taboo in Society Amongst Kashmiri Youth

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Abstract: ***Background:** Depression among youth is a serious mental health problem that causes a persistent feeling of sadness and loss of interest in activities. Depression affects how youth thinks, feels and behaves and it can cause emotional, functional and physical problem. Although, depression can occur at any time in life, symptoms may be different between teens and adults. **Objectives:** The study aimed to assess the relationship between academic stress and the effects of level of academic stress on depression among university students. **Material and Methods:** A cross-sectional study was conducted on the youth of Kashmir University students. The representative sample consisted of 50 individuals, who all participated on a voluntary basis. The statistical analysis was performed using SPSS. **Results:** The findings revealed that a considerable proportion of students experienced symptoms associated with depression, including loss of interest in activities (54%), feelings of hopelessness (78%), and difficulty in decision-making (70%). A large number of respondents also reported problems with concentration during studies (77.6%) and sleep disturbances (64%), indicating the presence of significant psychological stress among students. Female students reported higher levels of depressive symptoms compared to male students in several indicators. Overall, the results suggest that depression and academic stress are prevalent among university students and may negatively influence their mental well-being and academic performance. **Conclusion:** Depression remains a significant mental health concern that affects individuals across all ages, genders, and socioeconomic backgrounds. The findings highlight that depression is not merely a temporary emotional state but a complex psychological condition influenced by biological, psychological and environmental factors. Its impact extends beyond emotional well-being often impairing cognitive functioning, daily activities, and academic performance, particularly among adolescents and young adults.*

Keywords: Academic stress, Mental Health, Psychological well-being, Emotional and Behavioral Problems, Youth Depression

1. Introduction

Depression in adolescence is a common mental health disease with prevalence of 4-5 % in mid to late adolescence. It is a major risk factor for suicide and can also lead to social and educational impairments. Consequently, identifying and treating this disorder is crucial. General practitioners and primary care providers are frequently the first line of contact for adolescents in times of distress and can be crucial to identify mental health issues amongst these patients. They can facilitate early identification of depression, initiate treatment and refer the adolescents for mental health specialists. It is vital to make a timely and accurate diagnosis of depression amongst adolescence and a correct differential diagnosis from other psychiatric disorders, due to the recurrent nature of this condition and its association with poor academic performance, functional impairment and problematic relationships with parents, siblings and peers. Furthermore, depression at this age is strongly related to suicidal ideation and attempts (Forman-Hoffman V; 2016). World health organization (WHO) as “sadness, loss of interest or pleasure, feeling of guilt or low self-worth, disturbed sleep or appetite, feeling of tiredness, and poor concentration.” In 2015, depression was a major contributor of global disability and was responsible for 7.5% of all years lived with disability. While the global burden of depression is increasing, the low- and middle-income countries are more suffered from depression compared to high-income countries (Abdollahpour, et.al., 2022).

Depression is one the most prevalent problems in the mental health of students at different educational levels such as

high school, college and university. Depression is a common disorder among youth. Poor academic stress is one of the main cause of depression among youth. Depression can have a negative impact in cognitive functioning and this can impact negatively on academic performance. Depression can lead to many mental and physical disorders which are big threats for youth who make up an important part of the population in the community. The prevalence is common in mental health disease especially in middle adolescence that due to its particularities is a challenge to diagnosis. Depression among youth is higher than in general population.

Depression and anxiety have adverse consequences on adolescent development, including lower educational attainment, school dropout, impaired social relationships, and increased risk of substance abuse, mental health problems and suicide. Costello reported that the rate of self-harm in the UK has risen by 68% in girls aged 13–16 over the last 10 years. (Costello, et.al., 2006)

Depression and academic stress are the topic of interest for today’s society as well as for academic circle. This world is full with passion achievement and challenging for students but it is very bad to say that it is also period of stress for these students terms of adapting with new educational and social environment is stressful location for college students. There are nationwide increases in college students stress. It is also product of mental distress which produces frustration and associated with academic failure and academic anxiety. University students faces so many academic burdens, such as, continuous examination, answering questions in the class, competition with classmates, fulfilling teachers and

parental academic expectations these are also the effect of academic stress consequently these demands may lead to much academic pressure among students (Sax, et.al; 1997).

One of the most prevalent problems of mental health is depression, which is a serious health problem among the student population. Moreover, depression has a significant impact on academic performance, academic satisfaction and academic achievement (Arslan et.al;2009).

Objectives:

To study the relationship between academic stress and depression among university students. To study the effect of level of academic stress on depression among university students.

2. Material and Methods

Study Design and Setting

The present cross-sectional study was conducted at University of Kashmir, Srinagar over a period of one month. The study was designed to assess the relationship between academic stress and the effects of level of academic stress on depression among university students.

Data Sources

Only one source were used for the collection of data that was primary source. Primary source of data collection includes questionnaire and interview schedule regarding depression. Primary data were collected directly from the participants through structured questionnaire.

3. Result and Discussions

After collecting information from the respondents, this was put on a Master Chart and thereafter tabulated, analysed and interpreted as per the need of the study. Various stastical tests were used to facilitate analysis and interpretation in order to achieve the desired objectives. The present study was undertaken to assess the relationship between academic stress and the effects of level of academic stress on depression among university students.

Table 4.1: Respondents who tried to kill themselves

	Gender					
	Female		Male		Total	
	F	Percent	F	Percent	F	Percent
Yes	3	10.0	3	15.0	6	12.0
No	27	90.0	17	85.0	44	88.0
Total	30	100.0	20	100.0	50	100.0

$X^2=.284; Df=1; P-Value=.904$

Table 4.1 shows the number of respondents who tried to kill themselves in their life. The majority number of females is 90.0 per cent (F = 27) and only 10.0 per cent (F = 3) are in minority. The majority of males is 85.0 per cent (F = 17) and in minority there is only 15.0 per cent males (F = 3). The overall number of both male and female is 88.0 per cent (F = 44) Who do not try to kill themselves ever in their life.

Table 4.2: Respondents who feel that everything they have done has been a failure

	Gender					
	Female		Male		Total	
	F	Percent	F	Percent	F	Percent
Yes	13	43.3	7	35.0	20	40.0
No	17	56.7	13	65.0	30	60.0
Total	30	100.0	20	100.0	50	100.0

$X^2=.347; df=1P-Value=.556$

Table 4.2 shows the number of respondents feeling that everything they have done has been a failure. The majority number of males is 65.0 per cent (F =13) and only 40.0 per cent are in minority. Also, the number of female respondents who are in majority is 56.7 per cent (F = 17) and the number of females who are in minority is 43.3 per cent (F = 13). The overall percentage of both female and male is 60.0 per cent (F = 30) they do not felt that everything they have done has been a failure.

Table 4.3: Respondents who face a lack of concentration while studying

	Gender					
	Female		Male		Total	
	F	Percent	F	Percent	F	Percent
Yes	25	83.3	13	68.4	38	77.6
No	5	16.7	6	31.6	11	22.4
Total	30	100.0	19	100.0	49	100.0

$X^2=1.486; df=1; P-Value=.223$

Table 4.3 shows the number of respondents who are facing a lack of concentration while studying. The number of females who are in majority is 83.3 per cent (F =25) and the number of females who are in minority is 16.7 (F = 5). Also, the number of males who are in majority is 68.4per cent (F = 13) and the number of males who are in minority is 31.6 per cent (F =6). The overall percentage of respondents is 77.6 per cent (F = 38) who are facing a lack of concentration.

Table 4.4: Respondents who feel that they would be better off not being alive any more

	Gender					
	Female		Male		Total	
	F	Percent	F	Percent	F	Percent
Yes	13	43.3	4	20.0	17	34.0
No	17	56.7	16	80.0	33	66.0
Total	30	100.0	20	100.0	50	100.0

$X^2=2.911; df=1; P-Value=.088$

Table 4.4 shows the number of respondents who think or feel that they would be better off not being alive any more. The majority of male is 80.0 (F =16) and the number of males who are in minority is 20.0 (F =4). Also, the number of females who are in majority is 56.7 per cent (F = 17) and the number of females who are in minority is 43.3 per cent (F=13). The overall number of both male as well as female is 66.0 (F =33) and they don't think or feel that they would be better off not being alive anymore.

Table 4.5: Respondents who don't sleep well

	Gender					
	Female		Male		Total	
	F	Percent	F	Percent	F	Percent
Yes	18	60.0	14	70.0	32	64.0
No	12	40.0	6	30.0	18	36.0
Total	30	100.0	20	100.0	50	100.0

$X^2=.521$; $df=1$; $p\text{-Value}=.470$

Table 4.5 shows the number of respondents who don't sleep well. The number of males who are in majority is 70.0 per cent (F = 14) and also the number of males who are in minority is 30.0 per cent (F = 6). Also, the number of females who are in majority is 60.0 per cent (F = 18) and the number of females who are in minority is 40.0 per cent (F = 12). The overall number of both male as well as female is 64.0 (F = 32) who don't sleep well.

Table 4.6: Respondents who sometimes feel that they have no future

	Gender					
	Female		Male		Total	
	F	Percent	F	Percent	F	Percent
Yes	19	63.3	7	35.0	26	52.0
No	11	36.7	13	65.0	24	48.0
Total	30	100.0	20	100.0	50	100.0

$X^2=3.860$; $df=1$; $p\text{-Value}=.049$

Table 4.6 shows the number of respondents who feel sometimes that they have no future. The number of male who are in majority is 65.0 per cent (F = 13) and the number of males who are in minority is 35.0 per cent (F = 7). Also, the number of females who are in majority is 63.3 percent (F= 19) and also the number of females who are in minority is 36.7 percent (F =11). The overall number of both male as well as female is 52.0 per cent (F = 26) who sometimes feel that they have no future.

4. Conclusion

Overall, it may be said that depression is one of the most prevalent problems in the mental health of students at different educational levels, such as high school, college and university. Depression is a common disorder among youth. The study highlights that depression among students is a significant mental health concern that adversely affects their emotional well-being, cognitive functioning, and academic performance. Persistent feelings of sadness, low self-esteem and loss of interest in daily activities can hinder student's personal and social development. Educational institutions should implement awareness programs and counselling services to promote mental well-being among students. Addressing depression effectively can help improve students overall quality of life and academic success.

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