

# Depression, Anxiety and Stress, and Family Affluence among College Students during COVID-19 Pandemic

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**Abstract:** ***Aim:** The present study aims to assess the Depression, Anxiety and Stress, And Family Affluence among College Students During Covid-19 Pandemic. **Methods:** A sample of 100 college students (50-Males & 50-Female) was approached through online mode for the present study. DASS21 was used to assess the level of depression, anxiety and stress, and FAS III (Family Affluence Scale III) to assess the socioeconomic status of the family. **Results:** The levels of stress and depression were found to be mild, whereas the level of anxiety was moderate among males and females, also, no significant gender difference in regards to depression, anxiety and stress was found among college students. The results show a negative correlation between depression, anxiety and stress, and family affluence. **Conclusion:** This pandemic has taken a toll on everybody's mental health. Stress, anxiety and depression have affected everyone regardless of the age, gender or profession. The findings of the study suggest that there is no significant gender difference regarding stress, anxiety and depression among college students, the pandemic seemed to have affected both male and female students equally. The levels of stress and depression were found to be mild, whereas the level of anxiety was moderate among males and females. And, the study revealed a negative correlation between depression, anxiety and stress, and family affluence.*

**Keywords:** Anxiety, COVID-19, Depression, Family Affluence, Stress

## 1. Introduction

### COVID-19 Pandemic

COVID-19 is an infectious disease caused by the newly discovered corona virus. The first cases were reported in December 2019, in China. The COVID-19 virus spreads primarily through saliva droplets or from nose when an infected person coughs or sneezes. The vaccines for coronavirus are in trial for now and the only way out right now is prevention. The novel corona virus is not just affecting the physical health but also psychological, both directly and indirectly. Major factors affecting the psychological health of people include the enforcement of unfamiliar public health measures that intrude on personal freedom, large and growing financial losses, and conflicting messages from authorities also contribute to the widespread emotional distress and increased risk for psychiatric illness. (World Health Organization, 2019).

### Mental health and COVID-19

Fear, stress, and worry are normal responses to perceived or real threats. So, it is normal and understandable that people are experiencing fear in contexts of the pandemic. Apart from the fear, significant changes in their daily lives like working from home, temporary unemployment, home-schooling of children, and a lack of physical contact with colleagues, friends and other family members etc, all deteriorate the mental health. (World Health Organization, 2020).

### Depression

Depression is a mood disorder that evokes distressing symptoms which affect how we feel, think, and handle daily activities, such as working, eating, or sleeping. Depression affects different people in different ways. Researchers

suggest that a combination of genetic, biological, environmental, and psychological factors play a role in development of depression. (National Institute of Mental Health, 2016).

### Anxiety

Anxiety is an emotion, it causes feelings of worry and tension and affects and even physiological changes like increased heart rate, high blood pressure. People feel anxious when they face problem, like tension at work, before taking a test, or before taking an important decision but, for someone with an anxiety disorder, this anxiety does not go away and may worsen over time. Anxiety symptoms interfere with daily activities. Researchers have proved that both genetic and environmental factors contribute in development of an anxiety disorder. The American Psychological Association has warned that the negative mental health effects of the coronavirus will be serious and long-lasting. (National Institute of Mental Health, 2018).

### Stress

According to APA, Stress is a natural physiological or psychological response to internal or external stressors, but it can become unhealthy when it affects one's day-to-day functioning. Stress cause changes that can affect almost every system of the body, which influences how we feel and behave. According to APA's 2019 'Stress in America' survey, more than three-quarters of adults reported emotional or physical symptoms of stress, like feeling tired, headache, or changes in sleeping habits. Nearly 3 in 5 adults said they could have used more emotional support in the last year.

### Family affluence

Affluence is the state of having a good amount of money or wealth. In other words, prosperity. Family affluence simply refers to the prosperity of the family; it indicates the socioeconomic status of the family. A research by **Hobza, Hamrik, Bucksch, & De Clercq, (2017)** revealed that out of all of the countries in their research, most of them reported that adolescents from families with relatively low socio-economic status had a greater chance of reporting poor health.

## 2. Methodology

### Research problem

Depression, anxiety and stress, and family affluence among college students during covid-19 pandemic.

### Objectives

- To assess the level of depression, anxiety and stress among college students during COVID-19 pandemic.
- To explore gender difference in depression, anxiety and stress among college students during COVID-19 pandemic.
- To assess the relation between family affluence, and depression, anxiety and stress among college students during COVID-19 pandemic.

### Hypotheses

- There will be a significant difference between level of depression, anxiety and stress among male and female college students during COVID-19 pandemic.
- There will be a negative correlation between family affluence, and depression, anxiety and stress among college students during COVID-19 pandemic.

### Sample & sampling

A sample of 100 college students (50-Males & 50-Female) was approached through online mode (google form) from various cities of India, for the present study. Purposive sampling was used.

### Research design

Correlational research design was used to conceptualize and analyse the data. Correlational research seeks to figure out a relationship between two variables without the researcher controlling either of them. It aims to find out whether there is either positive correlation, negative correlation or no correlation.

### Tools

- **Depression Anxiety Stress Scales (DASS21)** developed by Syd Lovibond and Peter Lovibond. It is a self-report instrument designed to measure the three related negative emotional states of depression, anxiety and stress. We used DASS21, the revised version of the original 42-item questionnaire.
- **Family affluence scale (FAS III)** developed by Currie was used to measure the socioeconomic status of the participant's family. The FAS asks about the family's possessions and access to services needed to achieve an acceptable standard of living. **Currie et al., (2008)**.

### Procedure

Google forms of standardized tools- DASS21 and FAS III were created to collect data from Indian college students. Link of the Google form was shared with the target sample through social media accounts. After collection of the data, scores were calculated and appropriate statistical analysis were applied to find out the results.

## 3. Result

**Table 1:** Gender difference

Variables	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t-ratio	Sig. (p value)
Stress	M	50	5.7	3.54	0.42	0.90
	F	50	7.1	4.09		
Anxiety	M	50	5.28	4.07	0.69	0.50
	F	50	5.68	3.75		
Depression	M	50	5.0	4.13	0.75	0.46
	F	50	5.88	4.0		

**Table 2:** Correlation coefficient

Variables	Stress	Anxiety	Depression	Family affluence
Stress		0.61**	0.78**	-0.42**
Anxiety			0.58**	-0.62**
Depression				-0.58**

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

Table no.1 shows the mean difference of depression, anxiety and stress between males and females. The mean value for depression, anxiety and stress for males are found to be 5.0, 5.28, 5.7 respectively with 4.13, 4.07 and 3.54 SD and the mean value for females are found to be 5.8, 5.68, 7.1 with 4.0, 3.75, 4.09 as their respective SD. The mean value for females were found to be higher than males. However, no significant difference was observed. Males and Females did not differ significantly on depression ( $t = 0.73$ ,  $P = 0.96$ ), anxiety ( $t = 0.69$ ,  $P = 0.50$ ), stress ( $t = 0.12$ ,  $P = 0.90$ ). Both males and females reported mild stress, moderate anxiety and mild depression.

Table no.2 indicates the correlation between stress, anxiety and depression, and family affluence. All the correlation coefficients were found to be significant. All the aspects of psychological distress i.e. stress, anxiety and depression shared a high significant positive correlation with each other. The correlation coefficients between stress and anxiety and stress and depression were found to be 0.61 & 0.78. However, between anxiety and depression the  $r$  was found to be 0.58. As far as family affluence was concerned it shared a significant negative correlation with stress ( $r = -0.42$ ), anxiety ( $r = -0.62$ ) and depression ( $r = -0.58$ ).

## 4. Discussion

The aim of the present research was to explore the level of psychological distress (depression, anxiety and stress) among college students. The data for this study was collected from college students across different cities and from various fields. As far as gender differences in stress, anxiety and depression are concerned, both male and female students seem to suffer equally. The levels of stress and depression were found to be mild, whereas the level of anxiety was moderate among males and females. This could

be because of the current lockdown and fear of getting infected with COVID-19, which is so pervasive that similar experiences of distress are evident irrespective of gender.

Also, the findings of the current study shed light on the negative correlation of stress, anxiety, depression with family affluence. These findings could be attributed to the anticipated fear of unavailability of basic necessities and resources in the time of a pandemic. A study by **Rehman, et al., (2020)** states that lower the family affluence or prosperity, higher is the fear and uncertainty about future and availability of disposable income among students, which can be the reason of higher psychological distress. According to a research done by **Lancet, (2020)** on redefining vulnerability in the era of COVID-19, the most vulnerable children are part of families in which parents have informal jobs, who are not able to work from home, and who work as casual labourers, and this lockdown may reinforce the malicious relationship between poverty and ill health. The findings of the current study are supported by the research done by **Rehman, et al., (2020)** which examined depression, anxiety and stress among different sections of the Indian population in times of Covid-19 lockdown. Their findings suggest that people who do not have enough supplies to sustain the lockdown were most affected, and stress, anxiety, and depression were found to be negatively correlated with family affluence, no significant gender differences were found in stress, anxiety, and depression.

## 5. Conclusion

This pandemic has taken a toll on everybody's mental health. Stress, anxiety and depression have affected everyone regardless of the age, gender or profession. The findings of our study suggest that there is no significant gender difference in regards of stress, anxiety and depression in college students, the pandemic seemed to have affected both male and female students equally. The levels of stress and depression were found to be mild, whereas the level of anxiety was moderate among males and females. The reason could be the anticipated fear of the pandemic, adjusting with new learning patterns, increased screen time or lost touch with friends and family. The findings also suggest a negative correlation between family affluence and, depression, anxiety and stress, which means, lower the family affluence, higher will be the levels of depression, anxiety and stress, it may be due to the anticipated fear and uncertainty of availability of resources. Therefore, some standards and guidelines must be set on the hours of the online classes, the number of assignments etc. so as not overburden the students and some interventions should be there to check in on the students from lower affluent families, and help them in any way that the institution can.

## 6. Limitations and Suggestions

The findings of the present study have to be seen in light of some limitations.

- Inadequate sample size: larger the sample size, better will be the results as, small sample size may lack to identify significant relationships in variables.

- The study focuses only on college students. Including a sample of school students or teachers or other related professions, might give a wider perspective.

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