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Exploring The Mental Health Challenges: Academic Burnout, Depression, Anxiety And Stress Among University Students

Mahadevaswamy M[1], Dr. Sneha Nathawat[2]
[1](M.Phil. Clinical Psychology, Department of Clinical Psychology, Mahatma Gandhi Medical College, and Hospital (MGMC&H), Jaipur, Rajasthan)
[2](Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, IIS (deemed to be university), Jaipur, Rajasthan)

Abstract:
Background*: University students often face many challenges that significantly impact their mental health. Academic Burnout, Depression, Stress, and Anxiety have emerged as critical concerns, reflecting the complex interplay between academic pressures, social expectations, and personal well-being.*
Materials and Methods*: The study employed a cross-sectional design with a retrospective approach. For the current study, 100 male and 100 female university students aged 18 to 25 were randomly chosen from a single college in Jaipur city. Standardized instruments were employed using Google Forms for the data collecting process, including a Semi-Structured Socio-demographic sheet, the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Student Survey (MBI-SS), and the Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale (DASS-21).*
Results*: Independent t-test and Pearson's Correlation Analysis were used for the statistical analysis. The results revealed that female students demonstrated an elevated mean value of Emotional Exhaustion compared to male students (t=-2.090, P=0.039), with no notable gender disparity observed in Cynicism and Academic Efficacy. Additionally, females exhibited higher tendencies toward Depression (t=-2.890, P=0.005), Anxiety (t=-2.605, P=0.011), and Stress (t=-2.993, P=0.003) than their male counterparts. Moreover, there was a significant positive correlation between Academic Burnout and Depression, Anxiety, and Stress among university students.*
Conclusion: *The results of this study emphasize the need for focused treatments and support networks, with an emphasis on the mental health of female students. By addressing these gender differences in mental health, we can build an academic climate that is more welcoming and encouraging, which will benefit every student's achievement and general well-being.*
Key Word*: Academic Burnout, University Students, Depression, Anxiety, Stress*

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I. Introduction

In the world of competitive education, university students often face many challenges that significantly impact the student's mental health. Burnout, Depression, Stress, and Anxiety have emerged as critical concerns, reflecting the complex interplay between academic pressures, social expectations, and personal well-being. The term Burnout became apparent in the mid-1970s; Herbert Freudenberger and Christina Maslach were the first to begin examining burnout. Freudenberger, in 1974, pioneered defining the concept of employee burnout [1]. Maslach et al. in 1996 characterized burnout as a state of extreme exhaustion, leading individuals to develop cynicism about their profession's worth and question their competence [2]. While students differ from employees in psychological and professional aspects, we can categorize students' fundamental activities similarly to employees' tasks. Students must attend school or university and complete assignments to obtain qualifications [3]. Student burnout is characterized by exhaustion from a negative perspective on academic responsibilities, overwhelming academic pressure, and feelings of inadequacy as a learner [4]. When someone has this syndrome, they often experience three things: emotional depletion (losing emotional resources), depersonalisation (having a bad attitude towards people who need care and attention), and personal attributes (not being able to do as well at work) [2]. A systematic review conducted by Rosales-Ricardo et al. revealed that university students exhibited a 55.4% prevalence of emotional exhaustion, 31.6% experienced cynicism, and 30.9% reported challenges in academic efficacy [5]. Burnout among students can cause several problems, such as low motivation, high dropout rates, relatively high absenteeism [6, 7], suicidal ideation, decreased academic performance [8], and substance abuse (9), and a high prevalence of mood disturbances such as depression [10].

Depression is a prominent global psychological issue, impacting millions annually [11, 12]. Worldwide, 350 million individuals are affected annually [13]. As per ICD-10, depression is characterised by the presence of a "persistent feeling of sadness, a lack of interest in day-to-day pleasurable activities, a lack of energy, a pessimistic view of oneself, others, and the world, a lack of concentration, suicidal thoughts, and decreased sleep and appetite for the past two weeks" [14]. Young adults undergoing a pivotal phase of identity formation grapple with depression and stress due to various behavioural, social, emotional, economic, sexual, and academic challenges [15, 16]. This problem is notably heightened among college and university students, who navigate the academic and social pressures of preparing for their professional futures [17-20]. Worldwide, the occurrence of depression among university students ranges from 14% to 35% [21]. Numerous studies have demonstrated the detrimental impact of depression [22], anxiety [23], and stress [24] on students' academic performance in school, college, and university settings. These psychological challenges hinder academic achievements, lead to strained relationships and marital issues, and can significantly jeopardize future employment opportunities [25, 26]. In a survey conducted by Boston University in 2021, over 50% of the 33,000 college students surveyed reported feelings of anxiety or depression. Additionally, a significant 83% of respondents stated that their mental health challenges adversely affected their academic performance [27].

Another concept that is a critical concern among university students is anxiety. While anxiety is natural, it does not motivate or enhance our ability to excel at tasks and accomplish objectives. At moderate levels, anxiety can be advantageous, potentially boosting performance. However, when it transforms into a pathological condition, it hampers the ability to think and act freely, adversely affecting our mental state [28]. Anxiety is an enduring and involuntary emotional state marked by a pervasive sense of unease, characterized by apprehensive anticipation of imminent and unavoidable future threats. This condition is uncontrollable and diffused, leading to a persistent negative affect. Physiologically, it is accompanied by symptoms of tension and a continuous state of heightened vigilance [29]. Shah and Pol researched 400 college students in Navi Mumbai, aged 18 to 25, to assess their anxiety levels. Their findings found that 81.91% had mild anxiety, 11.95% had moderate anxiety, and 6.14% had potentially concerning anxiety levels [30]. Additionally, a study conducted at Punjab University indicated that 86.5% of college students had a general anxiety prevalence [31]. According to Mohamad et al. in 2021, the academic year emerged as the primary predictor of anxiety in college students. Other factors significantly associated with a heightened risk of anxiety encompassed financial support for education, alcohol consumption, inadequate sleep patterns, body mass index (BMI), presence of a close friend at the university, uncertainties about the future, active involvement in social activities, and encountering challenges with fellow students and lecturers [32].

Furthermore, stress is described as a condition where external challenges threaten our well-being. When an organism's adaptive abilities fail to align with environmental demands, it leads to psychological and biological disruptions [33]. Prior studies on mental health issues have indicated that students are expected to manage responsibilities in the future, academic stressors, and increased responsibilities in both academic and social spheres, which often result in mental health issues among university students [34]. The prevalence and frequency of these problems vary worldwide due to diverse factors. Academic and environmental stressors were identified as the most influential factors contributing to students' stress levels [35]. Life satisfaction, self-esteem, optimism, self-efficacy, and psychological discomfort were the primary determinants of stress among the participants [36]. A study conducted in 2013 found that among medical college students in Pakistan, 7.5% experienced low levels of stress, 71.67% reported moderate levels of stress, and 20.83% had high levels of stress. Mental health problems are widely recognized as a critical public health issue, contributing to one-third of global disability [34]. No previous research had examined the occurrence, frequency, and intensity of burnout, depression, anxiety, and stress among university students in Jaipur City, Rajasthan. Consequently, the study sought to carry out a thorough analysis of the gender disparities and complex interactions between stress, anxiety, depression, and academic burnout within this particular sample. Thus the following objectives and hypotheses were made;

Objectives:

1. To assess the gender differences in the Burnout dimensions among university students.
2. To assess the gender differences in Depression among university students.
3. To assess the gender differences in Anxiety among university students.
4. To assess the gender differences in Stress among university students.
5. To assess the relationship between Burnout Dimensions, Depression, Anxiety, and Stress among university students.

Hypotheses:

1. There will be no significant gender differences in Burnout dimensions among university students.
2. There will be no significant gender differences in Depression among university students
3. There will be no significant gender differences in Anxiety among university students

4. There will be no significant gender differences in Stress among university students.
5. There will be no significant relationship between Burnout Dimensions, Depression, Anxiety, and Stress among university students.

II. Material And Methods

This retrospective comparative study was carried out in Jaipur district, Rajasthan from June 2023 to July 2023. A total 200 university students (both male and females) of aged 18 to 25, years were for in this study.

Study Design: Retrospective Comparative study
Study Location: Jaipur, Rajasthan
Study Duration: June 2023 to July 2023
Sample size: 200 Students.
Sample size calculation: The target population from which we randomly selected our sample was considered 408. The sample size obtained for this study was 200 students based on sample size determination table provided by Krejcie and Morgan.

Inclusion criteria:
1. University Students (UG or PG)
2. Aged between 18 to 25 years.
3. Both Male and Female Students.
4. Students who provide consent for the study.
5. Students who can read and comprehend Hindi and English language.

Exclusion criteria:
1. Students with the history of severe medical conditions.
2. Students with the history of severe psychiatric disorder.
3. Student with the history of substance consumption and Organicity.
4. Students with the frequent abstinence

Procedure methodology

After written informed consent was obtained, a well-designed questionnaire was used to collect the data of the recruited patients retrospectively. The questionnaire included;

1. Structured socio-demographic sheet: It comprises information on domicile, family structure, age, gender, education, marital status, and religion.

2. The Maslach Burnout Inventory-Student Survey (MBI-SS): It was developed by Maslach et al. in 1997 and was used to assess the severity of academic burnout. It includes 15 items that are divided into three dimensions: Emotional Exhaustion, Cynicism, and Academic Efficacy. All the items are scored on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (never) to 6 (always). The alpha coefficients for Emotional exhaustion, Cynicism, and Academic Efficacy subscales were 0.838, 0.844, and 0.875, respectively, indicating good internal consistency [37].

3. Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale (DASS-21): The DASS-21 was developed by Lovibond and Lovibond in 1995. It is a 21-item version measuring three dimensions: Depression, Anxiety, and Stress on a rating of 0 (did not apply to me at all) to 3 (Applied to me most of the time). This scale was used to assess the presence of psychological distress among university students over the past week. The scale has good validity (0.277-0.603) and reliability (α=0.895) [38].

The procedure of the study:
The study meticulously adhered to ethical research practices, ensuring the utmost consideration for participants. Participants were provided with comprehensive information regarding the study's objectives before their involvement. Following their informed consent, the Socio-demographic sheet, MBI-SS, and DASS-21 tools were administered via Google Form, and confidentiality of all shared information was assured.

Statistical analysis:
The data analysis was conducted utilizing the SPSS-22 version software. The mean and standard deviation (SD) were employed to summarise the data. Furthermore, an independent t-test was performed to evaluate gender differences in the study variables among university students. Additionally, the association between the variables

was examined through Pearson Correlation Analysis. The statistical significance level was set at less than or equal to 0.05.

III. Result

The study aimed to assess gender differences and explore the associations between the variables of interest. The findings were described according to the hypotheses outlined at the beginning of the study to enhance the understanding of the study results.

Socio-demographic details:

The average age of male university students was 22.16 ± 2.15 years. Conversely, the average age of female university students was 22.02 ± 1.82 years. Table 1 provides more details on the characteristics of the participants.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Participants (N = 200)

Sample Characteristics/Groups		Male (n=100)	Female (n=100)
Age (M ± SD)		22.16±2.15	22.02±1.82
Education, n (%)	UG	50 (50%)	60 (60%)
	PG	50 (50%)	40 (40%)
Religion, n (%)	Hindu	90 (90%)	92 (92%)
	Muslim	8 (8%)	2 (2%)
	Others	2 (2%)	6 (6%)
Marital Status, n (%)	Single	94 (94%)	98 (98%)
	Married	6 (6%)	2 (2%)
SES, n (%)	Low	36 (36%)	16 (16%)
	Middle	44 (44%)	76 (76%)
	High	20 (20%)	8 (8%)

Source: Primary Data

H1: There will be no significant gender differences in Burnout dimensions among university students.

As per Table 2, the mean value in Emotional Exhaustion (EE) for male students is 15.64 with a standard deviation of 8.34. On the other hand, the mean value for female students is 19.00, with a standard deviation of 7.71. The t-test indicated a significant difference between the two genders (t=-2.090, *P*=0.039). In addition to this, the mean value in Cynicism (CY) for male students is 11.42, with a standard deviation of 6.72 while the mean value for female students is 13.78, with a standard deviation of 7.00. The t-test value was -1.719 with a *P*-value of 0.089. Here the *P*>0.05 and hence it is not significant at the 0.05 level indicating in terms of Cynicism, there was no significant difference between the two genders. Furthermore, the mean value in Academic Efficacy (AE) for male students is 21.62 with a standard deviation of 11.73. Similarly, the mean value for female students is 21.58, with a standard deviation of 8.79. The t-test value was 0.019 with a *P*-value of 0.985. Here the *P*>0.05 and hence it is not significant at the 0.05 level. Therefore, the null H1 has been partially rejected.

H2: There will be no significant gender differences in Depression among university students.

As per Table 2, the mean value in Depression for male students is 5.04 with a standard deviation of 5.37. On the other hand, the mean value for female students is 8.20, with a standard deviation of 5.55. The t-test value was -2.890 with a *P*-value of 0.005. Here the *P*<0.05 and hence it is significant at the 0.05 level. Therefore, the null H2 has been rejected.

H3: There will be no significant gender differences in Anxiety among university students.

As per Table 2, the mean value in Anxiety for male students is 6.06 with a standard deviation of 4.63. On the other hand, the mean value for female students is 8.60, with a standard deviation of 5.10. The t-test value was -2.605 with a *P*-value of 0.011. Here the *P*<0.05 and hence it is significant at the 0.05 level. Therefore, the null H3 has been rejected.

H4: There will be no significant gender differences in Stress among university students.

As per Table 2, the mean value in Stress for male students is 7.46 with a standard deviation of 4.84. On the other hand, the mean value for female students is 10.18, with a standard deviation of 4.21. The t-test value was -2.993 with a *P*-value of 0.003. Here the *P*<0.05 and hence it is significant at the 0.05 level. Therefore, the null H4 has been rejected.

Table 2: Comparison of Academic Burnout Dimensions, Depression, Anxiety, and Stress between Male and Female University Students (n = 200, 100 for each group)

Variables	Gender	M	SD	t	p
EE	Male	15.64	8.34	-2.090	**.039***
	Female	19.00	7.71		
CY	Male	11.42	6.72	-1.719	.089
	Female	13.78	7.00		
AE	Male	21.62	11.73	0.019	.985
	Female	21.58	8.79		
Depression	Male	5.04	5.37	-2.890	**.005***
	Female	8.20	5.55		
Anxiety	Male	6.06	4.63	-2.605	**.011***
	Female	8.60	5.10		
Stress	Male	7.46	4.84	-2.993	**.003***
	Female	10.18	4.21		

Note: EE=Emotion Exhaustion, CY=Cynicism, AE=Academic Efficacy

H5: There will be no significant relationship between Burnout Dimensions, Depression, Anxiety, and Stress among university students.

As demonstrated in Table 3, the results of the Pearson Correlation Analysis showed that there was a positive correlation between the dimensions of burnout, such as emotional exhaustion and depression ($r=0.224$, $p<0.05$), anxiety ($r=0.261$, $p<0.01$), and stress ($r=0.260$, $p<0.01$). On the other hand, a significant inverse correlation was seen with Academic Efficacy ($r=-0.225$, $p<0.01$). Comparably, Cynicism, another component, also showed a substantial positive correlation with Stress ($r=0.263$, $p<0.01$), Anxiety ($r=0.325$, $p<0.01$), and Depression ($r=0.323$, $p<0.01$). Additionally, there was a significant positive correlation between Academic Efficacy and Depression alone ($r=0.222$, $p<0.05$). In addition, there was a significant positive correlation between Depression and Anxiety ($r=0.715$, $p<0.01$) as well as Stress ($r=0.771$, $p<0.01$). In a similar vein, there was a strong positive correlation ($r=0.755$, $p<0.01$) between anxiety and stress. Consequently, the null H5 has been partially rejected while stating there is a significant correlation between the study variables among university students.

Table 3: Relationship Between Burnout Dimensions, Depression, Anxiety and Stress among University Students (n = 200)

Variables	EE	CY	AE	Depression	Anxiety	Stress
EE	1					
CY	.775**	1				
AE	-.225*	-.161	1			
Depression	.224*	.323**	.222*	1		
Anxiety	.261**	.325**	.108	.715**	1	
Stress	.260**	.263**	.061	.771**	.755**	1

Note: *Significant at 0.05 level, **Significant at 0.01 level, EE=Emotion Exhaustion, CY=Cynicism, AE=Academic Efficacy

IV. Discussion

The present study aimed to assess the gender differences in Academic Burnout, Depression, Anxiety, and Stress among university students and to assess the interrelationship between these variables. The results were discussed as per the objectives outlined at the beginning of the study.

The study's first objective was to assess the gender difference in Academic Exhaustion among university students. The results showed a significant gender difference in Emotional Exhaustion among university students, indicating that female students are likelier to experience Emotional Exhaustion than male students. Some earlier studies also reported the same, which aligns with the current study findings [3, 39-41]. Maslach et al. in 2001 speculated that burnout is more frequent among females than males [42]. Emotional Exhaustion refers to feeling emotionally drained, depleted, and overextended due to prolonged periods of stress and excessive workload [43]. Social and cultural norms might contribute to this disparity, as people and authorities hold the stereotypical attitude that females are more prone to burnout than males. Consequently, even mental health practitioners are more inclined to diagnose anxiety and depression in female patients than in male patients [44-47]. Psychological factors

such as self-efficacy, social support, sex roles, self-esteem and positive coping strategies also significantly affect student burnout. In their study, Yang and Farn reported that higher social support and self-efficacy lower students' burnout. Additionally, the way people experience burnout may differ for both sexes [5]. According to Maslach et al., men often display higher degrees of depersonalization than women, whereas women typically feel higher levels of emotional exhaustion [42]. This observation aligns with gender role theory [48], which suggests that societal norms influence these differences. This hypothesis holds that because women are socially and culturally encouraged to show their emotions, they are more prone to exhibit physical and emotional exhaustion. Men, on the other hand, are more inclined to become detached and withdraw while under stress, which causes depersonalization since they are socialized to hide their feelings.

The present study reported no significant difference in Cynicism or Depersonalization. Cynicism refers to a negative attitude or feelings of distrust and detachment towards one's work, colleagues, or organization. This indicates that both male and female students are equally susceptible to these aspects of burnout. The present study's findings were in line with those of other studies [49-52]. Despite observing gender differences in emotional exhaustion within the study, another significant finding indicates no notable gender difference in academic efficacy. This suggests that the presence or absence of emotional exhaustion does not significantly impact academic efficacy among both genders. In other words, regardless of whether students experience emotional exhaustion, their academic efficacy remains consistent, implying that emotional exhaustion does not directly correlate with academic performance or self-perceived competence in this context. In research focused on university students, there is inconsistency in the findings concerning the influence of gender. For instance, certain studies involving medical students indicated a higher susceptibility to burnout among women, while different studies observed contrasting results. Additionally, a limited number of studies have highlighted elevated levels of burnout among male students [40] due to inconsistencies in previous studies regarding gender differences in burnout. Additional research can help validate and contextualise the findings from the current study, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between gender and burnout.

The study's second goal was to evaluate the disparity in depression across genders among university students. The results of this study showed that there is a considerable gender difference in depression, with female students being more susceptible to depression than male students. The study findings align with the previous studies [53-57]. Chakraborty et al. reported that one's gender significantly influences mental health problems [54]. According to APA, one crucial reason behind the significant difference is how males and females respond to mental health problems like depression, anxiety, and stress [58]. According to research by Siripongpan et al. [59] on first-year college students, pathological stress affected 51.1% and 7.0% of the participants, respectively, with depression. Furthermore, compared to other gender groups, female samples had excellent rates of pathological stress and depression. Over the past few decades, the understanding of depression by medical professionals has changed dramatically. Depression can have a variety of causes. According to Beck, some people have negative biases in their early cognitive schemes about who they are and what they have gone through, which makes them more susceptible to depression. Depression symptoms might arise as a result of this negative thinking habit. Rather than being a disease, depression is thought to be an adaptive reaction to psychological stress [60]. In previous research, Gryphon and Felsenthal did, however, point out that significant depression in students can have other reasons, such as losing a parent or close friend, or more internal issues like self-worth or self-respect. They also note that, regardless of the cause of the depression, feelings of hopelessness and low self-esteem will nearly always accompany it [61]. It's essential to consider the cyclic relationship between alcohol and tobacco use, stress, and depression in research studies. Kunwar et al. likely found evidence suggesting that individuals may use alcohol and tobacco as coping mechanisms to deal with stress and depression. In turn, these substances can exacerbate these mental health issues [62]. This cyclical relationship highlights the need for more comprehensive research in this area.

The third goal of the study was to assess gender differences in anxiety among university students. The study's findings found that female students were more vulnerable to anxiety than their male counterparts, demonstrating a substantial gender difference in anxiety. This finding aligns with previous studies [63-66]. Research was done on coping mechanisms, anxiety, and depression in teenagers by Bryme in 2000. The findings revealed that, by the time they are in their 12th grade, men exhibit a noticeably lower level of Anxiety and fear than do girls, and that, at this point, both sexes employ distinct coping mechanisms to manage their feelings of fear and anxiety [67]. Research from the 1950s suggests that anxiety and academic performance are negatively correlated [63]. According to the findings, girls experience health anxiety and meta-worry at higher rates than boys. Furthermore, it may be deduced that, because of metacognition, girls are more likely than boys to think that worry is unmanageable and should be avoided. Anxiety over one's health is correlated with metacognitive views of the uncontrollability of worry. It implies that health issues and social anxiety more significantly impact a person if they believe that worry is uncontrollable. Because metacognitive beliefs regarding the uncontrollability of worry are more common in females than in boys, girls engage in meta-worry more often than boys. It indicates that girls think they can't manage their fear. They experience type II concern, which is anxiety over their own worry.

Avoiding worries and meta-worry are related in both males and girls. It implies that they are experiencing type II worry if they think anxiety is harmful and should be avoided. Females believe that worrying keeps them alert to warning signals, helps them avoid unpleasant things from happening in the future, and is beneficial. Males are more likely than women to employ distraction as a coping mechanism [68].

The study's fourth objective was to assess the gender difference in stress among university students. According to the current study, there are gender variations in stress, with women reporting far greater levels of stress than men. Similar to our findings, being a woman has positively affected perceived stress [69]. Additionally, Brougham et al. concurred that college women often experienced more significant levels of stress [70]. This female vulnerability to stress levels was consistent with findings from earlier investigations [69]. In a controlled setting, Schmaus et al. [71] examined gender differences and discovered that women could be more susceptible than males to repeated stress exposures. Similar to our study, Thawabein and Quaisy [72] concurred with Harutyunyan et al. [73] that female student had felt more significant perceived stress than male students. Notably, the change to a college helped to explain why their first year of school was so stressful. The results of Leong et al. [74] study, which included highly functioning college freshmen at an Ivy League university, did not, however, support our findings on stress. The parents of these students tended to have higher levels of education than parents at major public universities, a plausible rationale for their discoveries the researchers found [75]. According to Melaku et al. [76], students who smoke cigarettes and drink alcohol have increased risks of experiencing stress. Students frequently use these chemicals as a means of solving problems. Medical students frequently utilise drugs, and several research from India and other nations bring up this problem.

The study's ultimate goal was to evaluate the relationship between stress, anxiety, depression, and burnout among college students. The results of the current study showed that academic burnout showed a significant positive relation with stress, anxiety, and depression, which is consistent with earlier research. Academic burnout and depression were shown to have a substantial positive relation in a comprehensive review and meta-analysis investigating the relationship between these three conditions [77]. In line with the current investigation, Kaur [27] found a significant positive correlation between burnout, anxiety, and depression. Our findings concur with those of past research in this area, including that of Alharbi et al. [78] investigation on students, which discovered a high, positive, and significant correlation between stress, anxiety, and depression. Bhardwaj et al. [79] discovered a link between stress and anxiety, and anxiety and depression, and stress and depression in related research including students. Koutsimani et al. [77] discovered a substantial correlation between burnout and anxiety as well as depression by meta-analysis.

Akova et al. [80] also found a significant positive correlation between depression and burnout. However, it is still unclear whether depression results from burnout or vice versa [81]. Additionally, research indicates that worry raises one's vulnerability to burnout and that there is a substantial correlation between the two [82]. In addition to this, numerous researchers have discovered that burnout and depression are two distinct concepts [83,84] and that burnout can lead to depression [81, 85, 86]. Nevertheless, other research has shown that depression and burnout have overlapping and comparable concepts and are connected in both directions [87]. Because emotional exhaustion and depression share characteristics like mood states, there is still uncertainty regarding the distinction between the two [81, 88]. Our research showed that higher levels of emotional exhaustion were associated with disorders like anxiety and depression. In a similar vein, emotional exhaustion has been linked to increased health issues, including anxiety, depression, and sleeplessness [89]. According to a study, burnout and depression are two different concepts. It's yet unknown how they are related causally [90]. Additional long-term research is required to elucidate the causal association between burnout and depression.

V. Conclusion

In this competitive era, psychological distress among university students is a concern in the form of academic burnout, anxiety, depression, and stress. The present study identified female students are likely to experience more emotional exhaustion than male students. Furthermore, the findings supported the higher rates of stress, anxiety, and depression among female students than male students. Stress, anxiety, sadness, and emotional exhaustion were found to be significantly correlated with one another among students. Thus, it is plausible to draw the conclusion that academic burnout may be contributing to or escalating factors related to students' mental health. Accordingly, implementing the required curriculum modifications and offering mental health support services can enhance students' mental well-being and boost their output in educational environments. The results of this study emphasize the need for focused treatments and support networks, with an emphasis on the mental health of female students. By addressing these gender differences in mental health, we can build an academic climate that is more welcoming and encouraging, which will benefit every student's achievement and general well-being.

Limitations and future directions

Since the students filled out the questionnaires through Google Forms, it is possible that they may have provided false information. The study is unable to assess the cause-and-effect relationship. To further investigate the cause-and-effect relation, future researchers might carry out longitudinal, or prospective investigations. Additionally, a thoughtful comparison across departments might be made, acknowledging that students from diverse streams may experience different forms of psychological distress and academic fatigue. This comparative study could investigate variables like the pressure to perform academically that is unique to clinical and non-clinical courses, different assessment techniques that include both theoretical and practical evaluations, different exam frequencies (monthly, quarterly, semester, and annual), and their possible effects on students' academic performance. Furthermore, as important contributors to students' mental health, family support, drug use, and socioeconomic status must all be thoroughly studied. Through the consideration of these complex components, a thorough understanding of the variables influencing students' well-being may be obtained, opening the door to customized support systems and focused interventions.

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