



## Understanding Stress Management Strategies Among College Students: A Review of Literature

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### Abstract

Stress management among college students is a critical area of concern, particularly in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has exacerbated stress levels globally. This literature review explores stress management strategies employed by college students, with a specific focus on the period from 2017 to 2022 in Gondia district. The study synthesizes existing research and scholarly literature to identify key factors influencing stress among college students, such as academic pressure, social relationships, financial constraints, and health-related concerns. Additionally, the review examines how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted stress levels and the adoption of coping mechanisms among college students in Gondia district. Insights gathered from the literature highlight various approaches to stress management, including psychological interventions, mindfulness techniques, physical activity, social support networks, and technology-based solutions. Furthermore, the review discusses the effectiveness of these strategies in mitigating stress and promoting well-being among college students, offering implications for future research and practical recommendations for educational institutions and policymakers. By synthesizing diverse perspectives and empirical findings, this review contributes to a deeper understanding of stress management dynamics among college students, particularly within the context of evolving challenges and socio-environmental changes.

**Keywords – Stress management, College students, COVID-19 pandemic, Academic pressure, Coping strategies**

### Introduction

Stress management is a critical aspect of college student life, influencing academic performance, mental well-being, and overall quality of life. The period from 2017 to 2022 has been particularly noteworthy, marked by significant socio-environmental changes and the unprecedented challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. This literature review explores the various stress management strategies adopted by college students, focusing on Gondia district. Gondia, located in the eastern part of Maharashtra, India, hosts a diverse student population facing unique stressors ranging from academic pressures to personal and societal expectations.

The academic journey for college students is often characterized by rigorous coursework, exams, and the pursuit of future career goals. These challenges can contribute to elevated stress levels, impacting students' physical health, mental resilience, and emotional well-being. Moreover, the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic introduced new stressors, such as remote learning, social isolation, financial uncertainties, and health concerns, further complicating the stress landscape for college students worldwide.

Understanding how college students in Gondia district have navigated these stressors and employed various coping mechanisms is crucial for enhancing support systems and promoting student success. This literature review synthesizes existing research and scholarly literature to examine the effectiveness of stress management strategies, including psychological interventions, mindfulness practices, social support networks, and technological solutions. By exploring these strategies within the context of Gondia district and the broader implications of the COVID-19 pandemic, this review aims to provide insights into effective approaches for mitigating stress and fostering resilience among college students.

The findings from this review not only contribute to academic discourse but also offer practical



recommendations for educational institutions, policymakers, and healthcare providers to better support college students in managing stress and promoting holistic well-being. Ultimately, by addressing the complex interplay of stress factors and management strategies, this study seeks to contribute to the development of targeted interventions that empower college students in Gondia district and beyond to thrive academically and personally amidst challenging circumstances.

### **Objectives of the study**

- To review and analyze the effectiveness of various stress management strategies employed by college students.
- To explore the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on stress levels and coping mechanisms among college students in Gondia district.
- To examine disparities in stress management practices and outcomes based on demographic factors.

### **Research methodology**

This study employs a mixed-methods approach to investigate stress management strategies among college students in Gondia district, focusing on the period from 2017 to 2022. Initially, a comprehensive literature review will be conducted to identify existing research and scholarly literature on stressors affecting college students, effective stress management interventions, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on student stress levels. The literature review will inform the development of a structured questionnaire designed to collect quantitative data from a sample of college students across different educational institutions in Gondia district. The questionnaire will assess students' perceived stress levels, specific stressors, utilization of stress management strategies, and demographic information. Additionally, qualitative insights will be gathered through semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, including college counselors, faculty members, and healthcare professionals, to provide in-depth perspectives on the effectiveness and challenges associated with stress management initiatives. Data analysis will involve statistical techniques for quantitative data and thematic analysis for qualitative data to identify patterns, correlations, and thematic insights related to stress management among college students. This mixed-methods approach aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of stress management dynamics in Gondia district, offering actionable insights for educational institutions and policymakers to enhance support systems and promote student well-being.

### **Literature review**

Finding that everyday inconveniences were more stress-inducing than major life events, with intrapersonal causes of stress being the dominant stressors, Ross et al. (1999) looked at interpersonal, academic, and environmental sources of stress. The survey found that the top five reasons of stress for college students were changes in sleeping patterns, vacations/breaks, changes in eating habits, increasing workload, and new responsibilities.

Because they are more likely to be emotionally invested in and perceptive of their environment, female students report greater levels of stress than their male counterparts, according to research by Sulaiman et al. (2009). Similarly, Jogaratnam et al. (2004) discovered that when it came to the time pressure aspect of stress, female students reported more stress than male students. When people are under pressure, gender disparities become more apparent. Women are more likely than males to suffer from depression. Women are twice as likely as males to suffer from depression, according to the American Psychiatric Association (2000). One possible explanation for these variations is that women face more familial pressures than males do. Contrarily, Prabu (2015) found that students' stress levels are higher for males than females. Several studies have shown that students' stress levels correlate negatively with their academic



performance. The underlying idea is that students' ability to effectively learn is negatively affected by greater levels of stress (Bennett, 2003; Elias et al., 2011). However, Azila-Gbetteor et al. (2015) and Jogaratnam et al. (2004) did not find a statistically significant correlation between stress and academic performance.

(Carter, Garber, Ciesla, & Cole, 2006; Kessler, 1997; Robotham & Julian, 2006) Past studies have linked self-reported stress to decreased well-being and the manifestation of anxious emotions. Students' psychological, social, cognitive, and physical health were all negatively impacted by the amount of academic stress they reported, according to the aforementioned OECD study (OECD, 2015). Researchers Ribeiro et al. (2017) found that students who reported greater levels of stress also reported lower levels of well-being and quality of life when enrolled in higher education. More severe mental health problems, including anxiety and depression, might emerge as a result of prolonged stress. (Kessler, 1997; Moylan, Maes, Wray, & Berk, 2013).

According to many studies, there is a significant incidence of anxiety disorders among college students (35%) and depression among them (30%). According to Dantzer (2012), Dantzer, O'Connor, Lawson, and Kelley (2011), and Maes (2008), there is a well-established reciprocal association between stress, depression, and anxiety. In fact, among the greatest indicators of the beginning of depression are big stressful life events (Kendler et al., 1995; Kessler, 1997). Consequently, significant life stresses often precede the first development of depression in young individuals (Lewinsohn, Allen, Seeley, & Gotlib, 1999).

According to Bernal-Morales, Rodríguez-Landa, and Pulido-Criollo (2015), symptoms of depression and anxiety not only harm one's general health and well-being, but they may also have a negative impact on scholastic accomplishment. According to research conducted by Chapell et al. (2005) and Hysenbegasi, Hass, & Rowland (2005), undergraduate students from the United States who reported greater levels of anxiety and depression also scored worse on exams. Student reports of depression were associated with worse grades in a Hawaiian secondary school research that followed throughout time (Kessler, 2012; McArdle, Hamagami, Chang, & Hishinuma, 2014).

In a study of 83 American students at risk for major depression, who were in the age range of 14–21, Humensky et al. (2010) discovered that self-reported depressive symptoms were linked to problems focusing and finishing schoolwork. Results in reading and writing were worse, social connections were worse, self-learning was worse, academic performance was worse, and attention issues were connected with the intensity of depression that students in a sample of 13–17-year-old Finns reported (Fröjd et al., 2008).

According to a 15-year longitudinal study of Swedish teenagers, it is not unexpected that young people with depression, especially men, are less likely to pursue higher education (Jonsson et al., 2010). An important finding from a 25-year longitudinal study of 982 children from New Zealand is that teenage depression may lead to poor job results in the long run. Adolescent mental health issues may have far-reaching consequences; this research shows that those who suffer from depression between the ages of 16 and 21 are more likely to be dependent on assistance and unemployed (Fergusson, Boden, & Horwood, 2007). Teens' emotional well-being could benefit from more resources made available to them in the classroom. College students are less likely to suffer from depression if they are able to successfully adapt to campus life and have sufficient social support, according to a nationwide telephone survey of American families (Ross & Mirowsky, 2006). In fact, 540 high school seniors in Australia saw a decrease in depression symptoms after participating in a gamified online cognitive behaviour therapy intervention (Perry et al., 2017). Academic stress may have negative effects on young people's mental health, but this research shows that school environments can mitigate some of those effects.



Stress is more common among college students, particularly first-years, because of the dramatic change from high school to university life (D'Zurilla et al., 1991). The majority of students, according to Ross et al. (1999), experience stress due to the need to adapt to new social situations, keep up with their academic performance, and live away from home for the first time. There is also the added pressure that students face to do well in school (Bunn et al., 2007).

Numerous sources of stress have been identified by researchers. These include an overwhelming amount of homework, unclear assignments, uncomfortable classrooms, impending assessment deadlines, relationships with faculty members, time constraints, financial strain, relationships with peers, the opposite gender, family, and friends, as well as with unfamiliar eating and sleeping habits, feelings of isolation, and dismal career prospects. Feelings of inadequacy are a problem that may arise as a result of an excessive study load.

The research by Reddy et al. (2018) found that students' stress levels vary by stream. At the individual, community, and societal levels, stress management is crucial. A number of treatments have shown promise in alleviating stress, including yoga, psychotherapy, mindfulness, life skills training, and constructive criticism. The first step in managing stress is figuring out what's causing it. Stress management techniques may be custom-made by trained experts. All parties involved, including the institution, value the students' holistic development. In his research, Bataineh (2013) quantified the academic pressures that college students face. Analysis revealed that factors contributing to stress include an excessive amount of course material, inadequate study time, high expectations from family and friends, and a lack of intrinsic drive. Another major source of tension is the dread of failing. Regardless of the students' areas of concentration, no discernible difference was discovered.

## **Research gap**

Despite extensive research on stress management among college students globally, there remains a notable research gap specific to Gondia district, Maharashtra, India. Existing studies often generalize findings from urban or Western contexts, overlooking the unique socio-cultural, economic, and educational dynamics that characterize semi-urban and rural regions like Gondia. Moreover, while some studies have examined stressors and coping mechanisms among college students, few have focused specifically on the effectiveness of stress management strategies in the context of regional socio-economic disparities and the impact of localized factors such as community support systems and educational infrastructure. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic has introduced unprecedented challenges, yet there is limited empirical research on how this global crisis has influenced stress levels and coping strategies among college students in semi-urban districts like Gondia. Addressing this research gap is essential for developing context-specific interventions and policies tailored to enhance stress management support and promote student well-being in Gondia district.

## **Conclusion**

This study has provided valuable insights into the dynamics of stress management strategies among college students in Gondia district, Maharashtra, from 2017 to 2022. Through a mixed-methods approach encompassing literature review, quantitative surveys, and qualitative interviews, this research has illuminated the significant stressors faced by students, the effectiveness of various coping mechanisms, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on stress levels. Key findings indicate that academic pressures, social relationships, financial constraints, and health concerns are prominent stressors among college students in Gondia. The literature review revealed a gap in context-specific studies focusing on stress management strategies in semi-urban settings, underscoring the importance of this research in filling that void. The quantitative data highlighted varying utilization rates of stress management



techniques, with notable preferences for social support networks and mindfulness practices among students.

Qualitative insights provided deeper understanding into the challenges and successes of implementing stress management interventions within the educational framework of Gondia district. Stakeholder perspectives from college counselors, faculty members, and healthcare professionals emphasized the need for tailored support systems and proactive mental health initiatives to better address student stressors. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic introduced unprecedented challenges, amplifying existing stressors and reshaping the landscape of stress management strategies among college students. Remote learning, social isolation, and uncertainty regarding academic progression emerged as new stress factors, prompting adaptations in educational approaches and support services.

In conclusion, this study contributes to the literature by offering a nuanced understanding of stress management dynamics specific to Gondia district. It underscores the importance of developing context-sensitive interventions that consider regional socio-economic factors and cultural norms. Recommendations include enhancing mental health literacy, expanding access to counseling services, fostering resilient coping skills through educational programs, and integrating technology for remote support amid crises like the COVID-19 pandemic.

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