

# An exploratory study to assess the stress and its associated factors experienced by students during their final examination

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**Abstract:** Academic stress is a common phenomenon among college students, particularly during final examinations, and it may adversely affect their physical, psychological, and academic well-being. Students often experience stress due to increased academic workload, fear of failure, high family expectations, and inadequate sleep during examination periods. An exploratory study was conducted with the aim to assess the level of academic stress and its associated factors experienced by students during their final examination at School of Nursing, Desh Bhagat University, Mandi Gobindgarh. 100 students of B.Sc. Nursing 2<sup>nd</sup> year were selected through a convenience sampling technique. Data were collected using a self-administered structured questionnaire, which consisted of three sections: Section A: included socio-demographic variables, Section B consisted of the Academic Stress Scale to assess the level of academic stress, and Section C included a Five Point Likert Scale to assess associated factors influencing academic stress. The tool was validated by experts and reliability was established prior to data collection.

**Results:** The findings revealed that 60% of students experienced severe academic stress, 25% experienced moderate stress, and 15% experienced mild stress. The mean academic stress score was  $2.45 \pm 0.74$ . Regarding associated factors, 50% of students experienced a high level of influence, with a mean score of  $2.32 \pm 0.76$ . A significant association was found between academic stress and academic workload, sleep pattern, previous examination stress, family expectations, and religion at  $p < 0.05$ , while no significant association was found with age, gender, type of family, place of residence, and hours of study per day.

**Discussion:** The study findings indicate that academic stress during final examinations is highly prevalent among college students and is mainly influenced by academic and psychosocial factors rather than basic demographic characteristics. The results are consistent with previous studies that reported academic workload, sleep disturbance, and family expectations as major contributors to examination stress.

**Conclusion:** The study concluded that a majority of students experienced severe academic stress during final examinations. Early identification of stress and implementation of stress management strategies are essential to promote students' mental health and academic performance.

## Keywords

Academic Stress, Final Examination, College Students, Associated Factors, Stress Management

## Introduction

Stress experienced during examinations manifests in various forms, including psychological symptoms such as anxiety, irritability, and depression; cognitive symptoms such as difficulty concentrating and negative thinking; and physical symptoms such as headaches, fatigue, and sleep disturbances. These symptoms may impair academic performance and reduce students' overall quality of life. When stress remains unmanaged, it may lead to long-term mental health problems, including chronic anxiety, burnout, and academic disengagement.

Final examinations represent a critical phase in the academic life of students, as they often determine academic progression, career opportunities, and self-esteem. During this period, students are exposed to multiple stress-inducing factors such as heavy academic workload, limited time for revision, fear of failure, high parental expectations, and competition among peers. Excessive stress during examinations can negatively affect concentration, memory, sleep patterns, and overall well-being, ultimately impairing academic performance.

Examination stress is characterized by emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and physiological responses that occur before, during, or after examinations. Emotional responses may include anxiety, fear, and irritability, while cognitive responses often involve negative thoughts, difficulty concentrating, and memory lapses. Behavioral responses may manifest as avoidance of study, changes in eating patterns, or withdrawal from social activities. Physiological responses include increased heart rate, sweating, muscle tension, and sleep disturbances.

Understanding the level of stress experienced by students during final examinations is essential for early identification of at-risk students. Identifying major stressors can help educators and administrators implement targeted interventions such as academic counseling, stress management workshops, time management training, and peer support programs. Additionally, findings from this study can inform policy decisions aimed at creating a supportive academic environment that promotes student well-being.

Furthermore, understanding stress and its contributing factors can assist educators and administrators in implementing preventive measures such as stress management programs, academic mentoring, and counseling services. The findings of this study can also serve as baseline data for future research, including experimental and interventional studies focused on stress reduction. Therefore, the present exploratory study is undertaken to assess stress and its factors experienced by students during final examinations in a selected college.

## Objectives:

- To assess the level of stress experienced by students during final examinations.
- To assess the Academic factors associated with stress among students.
- To examine the association between level of stress with their selected socio-demographic variables.

**Method & Methodology:** An exploratory descriptive research design was used to assess the level of academic stress and its associated factors experienced by students during their final examination at School of Nursing, Desh Bhagat University, Mandi Gobindgarh. 100 students of B.Sc. Nursing 2<sup>nd</sup> year were selected through a convenience sampling technique.

**Tool:** Structured interview schedule consists of the following sections:

**Section-I:** It consists of demographic variables like age, gender, course of study, year of study, type of family, place of residence, academic workload, previous examination experience, hours of study per day, sleep pattern, and family expectations.

**Section II:** This section includes Modified Academic stress scale which consists of 30 statements regarding stress

**Section III:** This section includes Five point Likert scale which consists of 30 items to identify the factors associated with stress.

**Organization of the Data:** The data has been tabulated and organized as follows:

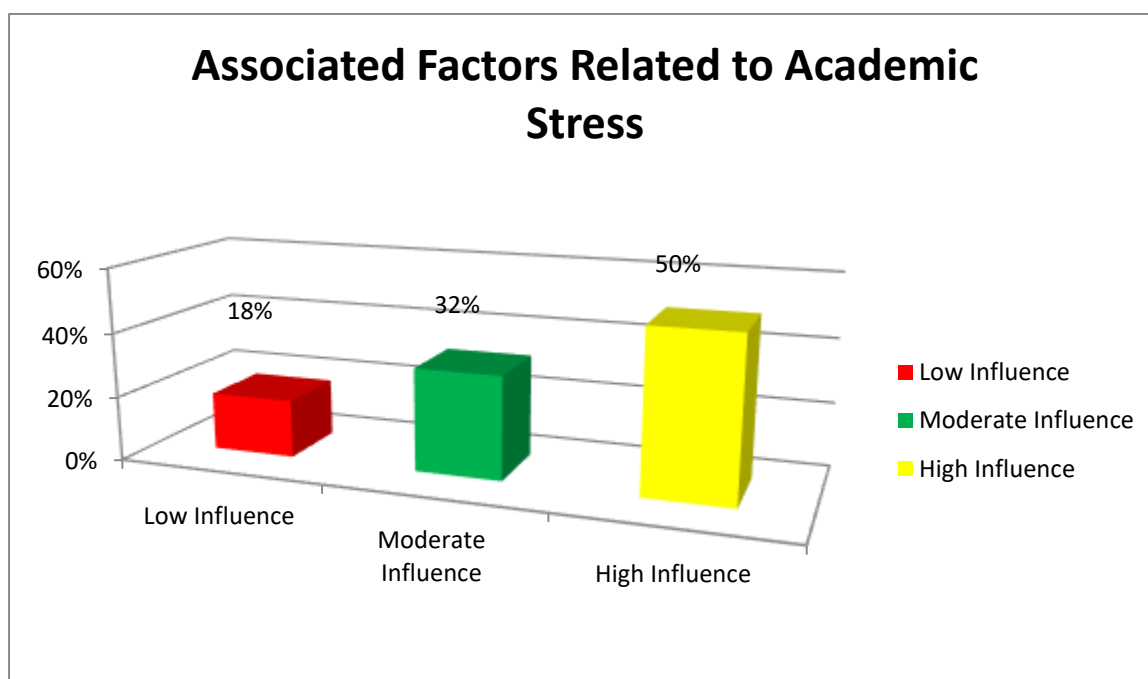
- Section A: Distribution of demographic and academic variables among students.
- Section B: Assessment of level of Academic stress among students
- Section C: Assessment of Associated factors of academic stress
- Section D: Association between Academic stress and selected socio demographic variables.

**Result:** The findings revealed that 60% of students experienced severe academic stress, 25% experienced moderate stress, and 15% experienced mild stress. The mean academic stress score was  $2.45 \pm 0.74$ . Regarding associated factors, 50% of students experienced a high level of influence, with a mean score of  $2.32 \pm 0.76$ . A significant association was found between academic stress and academic workload, sleep pattern, previous examination stress, family expectations, and religion at  $p < 0.05$ , while no significant association was found with age, gender, type of family, place of residence, and hours of study per day.

**Table No. 1. Level of Academic Stress among students**

Level of Stress	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Standard Deviation
Severe Academic Stress	60	60%	2.45	0.74
Moderate Academic Stress	25	25%		
Mild Academic Stress	15	15%		

The above table shows that the mean academic stress score of the students was 2.45 with a standard deviation of 0.74, indicating that the majority of students experienced severe academic stress during the final examination period.



**Figure 1: Associated factors related to Academic stress**

The figure indicates that a majority of the samples about 50% of the students experience a high level of academic stress, while only a small proportion, approximately 18%, experience a low level of academic stress.

**Conclusion:**

The present study concluded that academic stress during final examinations is highly prevalent among college students, with a majority experiencing severe levels of stress. Academic workload, disturbed sleep patterns, previous examination stress, and high family expectations were identified as major contributing factors. The findings indicate that academic stress is influenced more by academic and psychosocial factors

than by basic demographic characteristics. Therefore, it is essential to implement timely stress management strategies, provide emotional support, and create a supportive academic environment to reduce examination-related stress and promote students' mental well-being.

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