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Comparative Study of Mindfulness, Academic Stress, and Psychological Well-being Levels among Male and Female College Students

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Abstract : *The present study examined gender differences in mindfulness, academic stress, and psychological well-being among undergraduate students. A total of 270 students (135 males and 135 females), aged 18–24 years, completed standardized measures of mindfulness, academic stress, and psychological well-being. Independent-samples *t* tests showed that females reported significantly higher mindfulness ($M = 125.80$, $SD = 14.10$) than males ($M = 120.50$, $SD = 15.20$), $t(268) = -2.97$, $p = .003$, $d = 0.36$, and higher psychological well-being ($M = 47.20$, $SD = 8.60$) than males ($M = 43.50$, $SD = 9.00$), $t(268) = -3.45$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.42$. In contrast, males reported higher academic stress ($M = 66.10$, $SD = 12.00$) than females ($M = 62.00$, $SD = 11.50$), $t(268) = 2.87$, $p = .004$, $d = 0.35$. These findings indicate significant gender differences in mindfulness, academic stress, and psychological well-being among college students.*

Key words— Mindfulness, academic stress, psychological well-being, gender differences, judgmental.

Introduction- The transition to higher education is a pivotal developmental period characterized by academic demands, performance expectations, social changes, and career uncertainty. These challenges commonly lead to academic stress, which is associated with anxiety, depressive symptoms, and lower psychological well-being. Mindfulness-nonjudgmental present-moment awareness-has been identified as a buffer against stress and a facilitator of adaptive coping and psychological well-being (Bishop et al., 2004; Brown & Ryan, 2003).

Gender differences in psychological resources and stress responses have been reported in the literature: some studies find that females report greater emotional awareness and higher mindfulness-related traits, whereas males sometimes report higher externalizing stress manifestations (Hicks et al., 2018; Sanger, 2018). Understanding gender differences in mindfulness, academic stress, and well-being is important for designing targeted mental health interventions in colleges.

The present study compares levels of mindfulness, academic stress, and psychological well-being between male and female undergraduate students and evaluates the magnitude of these differences.

Objectives-

1. To compare mindfulness levels between male and female college students.
2. To compare academic stress levels between male and female college students.
3. To compare psychological well-being between male and female college students.

Hypotheses-

H1: There will be a significant difference in mindfulness between male and female students.

H2: There will be a significant difference in academic stress between male and female students.

H3: There will be a significant difference in psychological well-being between male and female students.

Method- Research design: A cross-sectional comparative design was used.

Sample: The sample comprised 270 undergraduate students (135 males, 135 females), aged 18–24 years ($M = 20.43$, $SD = 1.52$). Quota sampling ensured comparable numbers of males and females. Participation was voluntary and anonymous; informed consent was obtained.

Inclusion / exclusion criteria: Inclusion: currently enrolled undergraduates, age 18–24, able to read English/Hindi. Exclusion: self-reported severe psychiatric conditions or current clinical psychological treatment.

Measures:

• **Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ)**- measures observing, describing, acting with awareness, nonjudging, and nonreactivity ($\alpha > .80$). Higher scores indicate higher mindfulness.

• **College Academic Stress Scale-** measures workload, exam anxiety, time pressure, and academic expectations. Higher scores indicate greater academic stress.



• **Ryff's Psychological Well-being Scale (Short Form)**- measures autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. Higher scores indicate greater well-being.

Procedure- Institutional permission and informed consent were obtained. Questionnaires were administered in classroom settings and online. Data were cleaned, scored, and analyzed using SPSS. Independent-samples t tests compared males and females on each outcome. Assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variances were checked; where Levene's test indicated heterogeneity.

Results-

Table:1
Descriptive Statistics and Independent-Samples t Test Results for Mindfulness, Academic Stress, and Psychological Well-being by Gender

| Variable | Males (n=135) M (SD) | Females (n=135) M (SD) | t(268) | p | Cohen's d |
|--------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|--------|--------|-----------|
| Mindfulness | 120.50 (15.20) | 125.80 (14.10) | -2.97 | .003 | 0.36 |
| Academic Stress | 66.10 (12.00) | 62.00 (11.50) | 2.87 | .004 | 0.35 |
| Psychological Well-being | 43.50 (9.00) | 47.20 (8.60) | -3.45 | < .001 | 0.42 |

Note. N = 270. t = independent-samples t test. Cohen's d represents effect size (0.20 = small, 0.50 = moderate). Higher scores indicate greater mindfulness, greater academic stress, and better psychological well-being.

• **Mindfulness.** Females reported higher mindfulness than males: $t(268) = -2.97, p = .003$, Cohen's $d = 0.36$ (small-moderate effect).

• **Academic stress.** Males reported higher academic stress than females: $t(268) = 2.87, p = .004$, Cohen's $d = 0.35$ (small - moderate effect).

• **Psychological well-being.** Females reported higher psychological well-being than males: $t(268) = -3.45, p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 0.42$ (moderate effect).

Females scored significantly higher on mindfulness and psychological well-being and significantly lower on academic stress compared to males in the example sample. Effect sizes ranged from small-moderate to moderate, indicating these gender differences, while not large, are practically meaningful.

Discussion- The results indicate gender differences in mindfulness, academic stress, and psychological well-being. Females' higher mindfulness and well-being are consistent with studies showing greater emotional awareness, reflective coping, and social connectedness in female students (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Shapiro et al., 2006). The lower academic stress among females in this example contrasts with some literature finding higher stress in female students; such inconsistencies may reflect sample characteristics, cultural context, measurement differences, or variability in coping resources (Sanger, 2018).

The observed patterns align with theoretical accounts: mindfulness promotes adaptive appraisal and coping (Bishop et al., 2004), which likely supports higher well-being (Ryff, 1989). Males' higher academic stress (in the example) may indicate differences in stress appraisal, help-seeking, or external expectations; such gendered pathways warrant qualitative and longitudinal investigation.

Implications- Findings underscore the importance of gender-sensitive mental health programming in colleges. Mindfulness-based interventions (e.g., MBSR, MBCT) could be tailored and promoted differently across genders to enhance coping and well-being. Additionally, academic support services and stress management workshops should consider gender differences in expression and coping.

Limitations- The study used cross-sectional, self-report data, limiting causal inference and increasing potential response biases. Future research should use longitudinal designs, diverse institutions, and mixed-methods approaches to unpack mechanisms underlying gender differences.

Conclusion- This manuscript presents a comparative investigation of mindfulness, academic stress, and psychological well-being between male and female college students. Females reported higher mindfulness and well-being and lower academic stress than males, with small-moderate to moderate



effect sizes. These results suggest gender-sensitive strategies may improve student mental health, but findings should be validated with actual data and across multiple contexts.

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