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**Topic of Research: Mental Health and Coping Strategies: A Comparative Study of Students in Government and Private Universities of Delhi NCR**

### **Findings**

#### **1. Socio-Demographic Profile of Participants**

- a. Majority of participants were aged 21–24 years, facing academic and career-related pressures.
- b. Students aged 17–20 years experienced adjustment challenges, while those 25–28 years showed greater emotional maturity and coping ability.
- c. Overall gender distribution was balanced.
- d. Government universities had more male students; private universities had more female students.
- e. Government university students mainly belonged to lower- and middle-income families with larger households.
- f. Private university students were mostly from higher-income, nuclear families with greater financial stability.
- g. Private university students' parents were more educated and engaged in professional or business occupations.
- h. Government university students' parents were often involved in agriculture, labour, or informal sector work with lower educational levels.

#### **2. Prevalence of Mental Health Issues**

**a. The study revealed a high prevalence of psychological distress among students:**

- 89% of students reported moderate levels of stress, indicating that stress is a normative but concerning condition in university life.
- 7% experienced high stress, suggesting a subgroup at serious risk of psychological burnout.

**b. Anxiety levels were also notably high:**

- 62% of students experienced moderate to severe anxiety, reflecting widespread anticipatory stress related to academics, performance, and future uncertainty.
- 26% reported mild anxiety, indicating that very few students were entirely free from anxiety symptoms.

**c. Depression emerged as a significant concern:**

- 43% reported mild depression, while 27% experienced moderate to severe depression, indicating a substantial mental health burden.

**d. Institutional differences:**

- Government university students reported higher stress levels, primarily linked to financial insecurity, resource limitations, and cultural adjustment challenges.
- Private university students exhibited higher anxiety levels, driven by academic expectations, performance pressure, and financial investment concerns.
- Depression levels were relatively similar across both institutional types, suggesting shared emotional struggles despite differing stressors.

### 3. Factors Associated with Mental Health Issues

**a. Age-related patterns:** Younger students (17–20 years) showed higher stress and anxiety, largely due to adjustment to new academic and social environments. Students aged 21–24 experienced stress related to academic workload, internships, and career planning. Older students (25–28 years) reported lower stress and anxiety, likely due to greater life experience and coping mechanisms.

**b. Gender differences:** Female students reported higher levels of anxiety and depression, potentially influenced by societal expectations, safety concerns, and emotional burden. Male students reported higher stress but lower anxiety, possibly reflecting cultural norms that discourage emotional expression.

**c. Socio-economic influences:** Students from lower-income families experienced higher stress and anxiety, linked to financial instability and limited access to resources. Students from higher-income families experienced stress associated with performance expectations and maintaining socio-economic status.

### 4. Correlation Analysis

a. The study found significant interrelationships among mental health variables:

- Stress and anxiety showed a weak but statistically significant positive correlation, indicating that increased stress slightly elevates anxiety levels.
- Stress and depression also had a weak but significant positive correlation, suggesting stress contributes to depressive symptoms.
- Anxiety and depression demonstrated a moderate and significant positive correlation, highlighting a strong co-occurrence of these conditions.

#### b. Age correlations:

- No significant relationship with stress and anxiety.
- A weak negative correlation with depression, indicating younger students experience higher depression levels.

**c. Gender correlations:** Very weak and statistically insignificant correlations with stress, anxiety, and depression, suggesting gender differences exist descriptively but not statistically in this sample.

#### d. Institutional and environmental variables:

- Type of university (government/private) showed no significant correlation with mental health outcomes.
- Accommodation type (home, hostel, rented) had no significant effect.
- Course level showed no relation with stress or anxiety, but a weak positive correlation with depression.

### 5. Psychological Support Services in Universities

A significant proportion of students (60%) reported not feeling the need for professional psychological help, despite high levels of distress, indicating internalized stigma and normalization of stress. 50.5% of students reported the absence of any departmental mental health support system, highlighting institutional gaps. 32% were unaware of available services, while only 17% acknowledged their existence. Further 23% of the students reported absence of psychological support services at the university level, and 40% lacked awareness of such services, and only 37% reported the provision of mental health support service in university. These findings point to a serious communication and awareness deficit of the psychological support services offered by the universities. Utilization of services was extremely low (4.5%), indicating a large gap between need and help-seeking behaviour. Comparative utilization: Government universities: 6% usage, and Private universities: 3% usage. Major barriers in accessing psychological support services were identified as stigma associated with mental health issues, lack of awareness about services, lack of trust in institutional support systems, perceived poor quality or ineffectiveness of services, and logistical and accessibility challenges.

## **6. Coping Strategies among Students**

Students demonstrated a predominant reliance on adaptive coping strategies, including: active coping, planning, acceptance, positive reframing, and religious coping. These strategies indicate a generally constructive approach to stress management. Maladaptive coping strategies (e.g., substance use, denial) were reported at low levels, suggesting relatively healthy behavioural patterns overall. However, moderate use of self-distraction and self-blame indicates the presence of internalized stress and emotional struggles. Social support patterns included:

- Strong reliance on friends/peer groups
- Limited reliance on family support
- Minimal engagement with professional counselling services

A concerning proportion of students (31%) reported lack of any support system, which highlights social isolation risks.

## **Conclusion**

Mental health issues among university students are highly prevalent, interconnected, and multidimensional. Differences between government and private universities are reflected more in the nature of stressors rather than severity of mental health outcomes. Help-seeking behaviour is critically low, despite widespread psychological distress. There exists a significant gap between availability, awareness, and utilization of mental health services. Students demonstrate adaptive coping tendencies, but institutional and familial support systems remain inadequate. The findings underscore the need for systemic, inclusive, and context-specific mental health interventions in higher education institutions.