

## **THE ROLE OF SOCIAL SUPPORT IN STRESS MANAGEMENT AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS**

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### ***Abstract***

This article addresses the growing concern about stress among college students and explores how social support systems play a pivotal role in alleviating this stress. Stress in college students can be defined as the emotional, physiological, and psychological response that arises when individuals pursuing higher education face a combination of academic, social, financial, and personal pressures that exceed their ability to cope effectively. College life often brings about various stressors, including academic pressures, personal challenges, and the transition to a new environment. This study aims to uncover how different forms of social support, such as emotional, informational, and tangible assistance from friends, family, and peers, impact students' ability to handle these stressors. Social support is connected with attainment of well-being and academic achievement among students. By understanding the complex interplay between different forms of support and stress-coping mechanisms, this research contributes to the development of targeted interventions that can enhance students' overall well-being, academic performance, and long-term success. As students continue to navigate the challenges of higher education, fostering a supportive environment becomes an integral aspect of ensuring their holistic growth and mental health.

**Keywords:** Stress, social support, academic pressure

### **Introduction**

In today's rapidly evolving educational landscape, college students often encounter a multitude of academic, social, and personal challenges that can lead to heightened stress levels. Amidst these pressures, the influence of social support systems emerges as a critical determinant of students' ability to effectively manage stress. This paper aims to delve into the intricate interplay between social support and stress management among college students.

The transition to college life often coincides with newfound independence and responsibilities, creating a unique set of stressors. During this pivotal phase, the presence of social connections, whether in the form of friends, family, or institutional resources, can serve as a crucial buffer against the adverse effects

of stress. By investigating the various dimensions of social support, including emotional, informational, and instrumental forms, this study seeks to uncover the nuanced ways in which these networks contribute to stress alleviation.

Through a comprehensive review of existing literature, psychological theories, and empirical studies, this presentation aims to shed light on the mechanisms through which social support mitigates stress and fosters resilience among college students. Through an exploration of existing research, theoretical frameworks, and practical implications, this presentation aims to provide valuable insights into how fostering robust social support systems can empower college students to navigate challenges with resilience and thrive in their academic pursuits. Moreover, understanding the reciprocal nature of the relationship between social support and stress management is essential. While social support can aid in stress reduction, individuals under stress might inadvertently strain their support systems. This presentation will examine how maintaining a balance between giving and receiving support is crucial for sustaining healthy relationships and effective stress-coping strategies among college students.

Furthermore, social support networks act as a source of encouragement, fostering a sense of belonging and connectedness. By participating in group activities, engaging in meaningful conversations, and collaborating on projects, students develop a sense of community that bolsters their overall resilience. This shared experience of facing challenges collectively enhances their capacity to manage stress and adapt to the demands of college life. In essence, the role of social support in stress management among college students is multifaceted and profound. It extends beyond mere companionship to encompass emotional validation, practical guidance, and collaborative problem-solving. By cultivating diverse and robust support systems, educational institutions can empower students to not only navigate stressors but also thrive in their personal and academic pursuits.

As the presentation unfolds, it will also underscore the significance of self-awareness and communication skills in optimizing the benefits of social support. College is a time of personal growth and self-discovery, and students who can effectively communicate their needs to their support networks are more likely to receive tailored assistance. Highlighting the role of open dialogue within relationships, this paper will delve into how active communication fosters a deeper understanding of individual stressors and cultivates empathy within support systems. Furthermore, the cultural and contextual factors influencing the perception and availability of social support will be explored. Different cultural backgrounds and societal norms can shape how individuals seek and provide support.

In conclusion, this presentation not only highlights the intricate dynamics between social support and stress management but also emphasizes that the promotion of robust support systems is a shared responsibility among educational institutions, peers, families, and the students themselves. By recognizing the diverse nature of social support and its pivotal role in students' well-being, colleges can play a pivotal role in equipping students with the tools they need to effectively navigate challenges, promote resilience, and flourish both academically and personally.

## **Methodology**

### **Objectives of the study:**

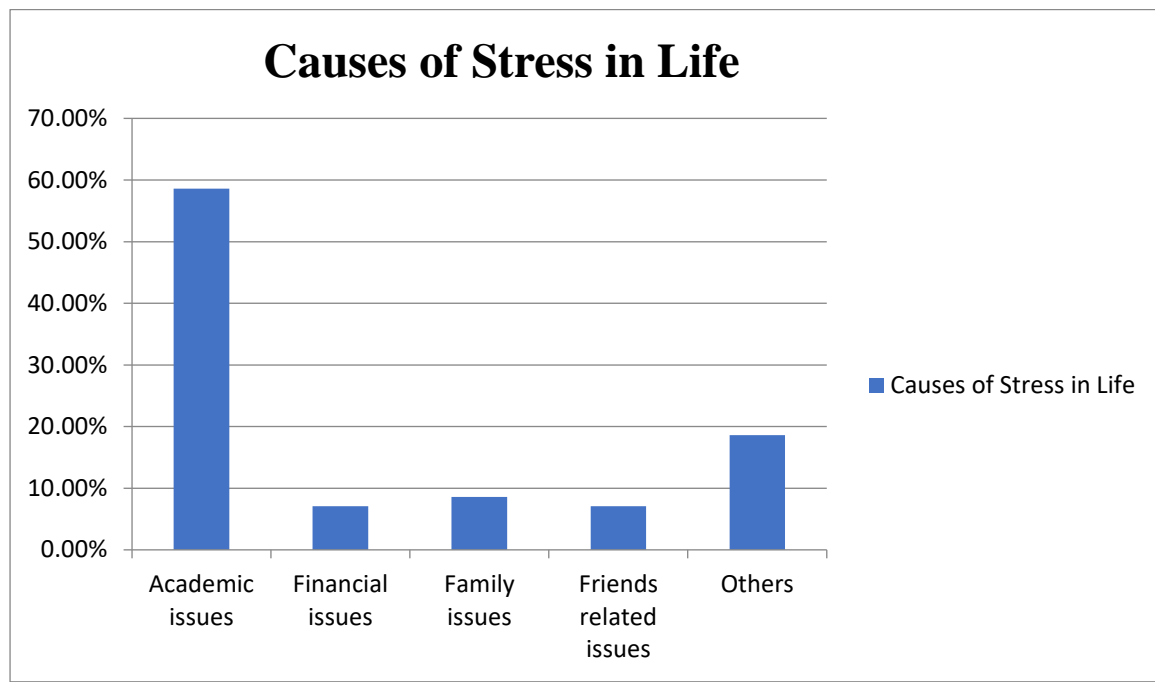
- To evaluate the degree of stress experienced by student population.
- To recognize the elements leading to stress in students.
- To investigate the relationship between the availability of social support and the perceived stress levels within the collegiate population.
- To identify the coping mechanisms employed by college students who receive social support and assess their effectiveness in reducing stress.
- Explore the effectiveness of social support interventions in reducing stress levels among college students.
- Identify the specific sources of social support (e.g., friends, family, and peers) that are most beneficial for stress management in college students.

The data for the study is collected through both primary and secondary sources. The primary data is collected through structured questionnaire from students in different colleges. The sample size is 70. The secondary data includes information from online databases, books, and journals.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

Quantitative data analysis is the method of processing raw data which has been collected as a segment of the study and use it to provide explanations, understandings, and interpretations of the phenomena, people, and situations. The primary data was collected from 70 students doing their graduation and post-graduation in different parts of Kerala.

From the data collected, 37% responded that they often feel stressed, and 33% have a neutral opinion, that is they sometimes feel stressed in their in their academic lives. The following graph shows the causes of stress in life.



Source: Primary Data

Figure:1.1

More than half of the respondents are of the opinion that academic issues are the main reason for their stress. Only a few people responded that financial and friend-related issues were the cause of their stress. Next analysis explains which type of social support is most effective for stress management. 41.4% of the respondents are of the opinion that all the options-emotional, informational, and tangible support are equally important for stress management. Among them, 37.10% gave more importance to emotional support.

This explains that the most common source of social support for college students is their friends. This gives the impression that they give more importance to their peer groups. Next, they prefer their family after friends as their source of social support. Only a minority preferred professors and pets as their sources of social support. The next survey leads to the conclusion that social support decreases stress levels. The majority of the respondents, which is more than 70%, have this opinion. Only 2.9% responded that social support increases stress levels. This shows that social support plays an important role in reducing stress levels. The data explains the best ways in which one can increase social support. About 57% responded that joining a support group is the best way to increase social support. Ignoring the stressors is the second preferred option to increase social support.

About 59% of the respondents explain that reaching out to friends or family is the best way for college students to seek social support. 27.1% of the respondents are of the opinion that all the mentioned ways

(joining a club or organization, seeking help from a counsellor or therapist) can be used by college students to seek social support. Social support helps improve academic performance and mental and physical health, other than stress management. So social support can be considered as an important factor that can strongly influence the lives of individuals. Most people consider the stigma associated with seeking help, lack of time, and fear of judgment to be the main barriers to seeking help. These barriers also result in an increased stress level among college students. They consider seeking social support taboo, which is actually destroying their mental health. The best way to provide social support to a friend who is experiencing stress is by actively listening to their problems and providing emotional support. The majority of the respondents, 75%, have put forward this opinion.

### **Results**

The majority of the respondents felt stressed during their academic year. More than half of the respondents are of the opinion that academic issues are the major reason for the stress they experience. As per the opinion of the respondents, emotional, informational, and tangible supports are equally important for stress management. College students give more importance to their peer groups because they consider their friends as the most common source of social support. The majority of the respondents, that is, 70%, are of the opinion that social support decreases stress level. The study has put forward the idea that joining a support group is the best way to increase social support. Reaching out to their friends or family is considered the best way in which college students can seek social support. The benefit of social support other than stress management is that it helps improve academic performance and physical and mental health. The main barriers to seeking social support are stigma associated with seeking help, lack of time, and fear of judgment. The most suitable way to provide social support to a person who is experiencing stress is by actively listening to their problems and providing emotional support.

### **Conclusion**

This paper has studied the crucial role that society plays in managing stress among college students. The role of society in stress management among college students is paramount and has far-reaching implications for the well-being of our young adults. Factors like academic stress, financial issues, family-related problems, and many other factors contribute to stress in a student's life. Students who feel stressed need support, mostly in the form of emotional support and informational, tangible, and other support. There are many sources of social support for college students. They include family, friends, teachers, pets, etc. Most of the students seek social support from their friend circles. Friends and family play a major role in reducing stress among students. The majority of the students claimed that social

support decreases stress levels. The best way to increase social support is by joining a support group and avoiding people who cause stress in a student's life. By developing a more supportive and inclusive environment, colleges and society as a whole can improve the well-being and success of college students. There are many benefits to social support, as it increases academic performance, improves physical and mental health, reduces pressure, increases sleep, etc. Besides this, there are some barriers to seeking social support, which may include stigma around seeking help, lack of time, fear of judgment, and others. In summary, we can say that social support plays a major role in managing stress among college students. This social support includes friends, family, teachers, pets, etc.

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