

# OVERCOMING STRESS DISORDERS OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS' BY NAVIGATING THE PATH TO RECOVERY THROUGH COUNSELLING

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## Abstract

**Background:** Stress disorder is a global threat affecting well-being, causing complex emotions, and affecting daily life. Counselling can help individuals regain wellness by providing a secure environment for discussing experiences, promoting emotional control, and enhancing overall well-being through coping mechanisms and stress management skills like mindfulness and cognitive-behavioural therapy. Counselling is crucial for overcoming stress-related disorders and leading healthier, more satisfying lives. **Materials and Methods:** The methodology employed in this article adopts a qualitative approach, focusing on Counselling and stress disorder. The research design involves a critical examination of a wide range of secondary sources, such as medical research articles, academic psychology journal articles, medical blogs, and Government reports. The textual data from government reports and articles has been thoroughly analysed to understand stress disorders and fatalities better. **Results:** The research aimed to explore the various consequences of stress disorders and provide practical insights for overcoming stress. The study's findings indicate that stress disorder has a damaging effect on students' mental well-being. It may result in social isolation, poor academic or professional performance, or even suicide. The results show that early intervention and ongoing support effectively address student stress. **Conclusion:** Findings show that stress is a disorder that starts from an early age. Counselling improves students' well-being and assists them in managing stress effectively. It helps students build resilience, cultivate positive self-beliefs, and cope with academic difficulties. Teaching stress management techniques is crucial for reducing stress and suicide. Collaboration among parents, teachers, counselors, and mental health professionals can help students achieve academic success.

**Keywords:** Disorder, Education, Mental Health, Suicides, Stress Therapy, Stress Management.

## INTRODUCTION

Stress is a natural response to challenging situations that can affect our physical, mental, and emotional well-being [1]. It can manifest in various ways, such as increased heart rate, difficulty concentrating, and changes in mood. Developing effective coping strategies and stress management techniques is essential for mitigating the negative impact of stress on our overall health and quality of life. In today's world, stress has become an omnipresent companion, frequently regarded as the body's innate response to demands or perceived threats [2]. The response, commonly referred to as the "fight or flight" mechanism, is not exclusively activated by physical threats but also by routine difficulties and stresses [3]. Stress, whether it arises from a job, academics, personal relationships, or financial challenges, serves as a signal that indicates the need for our attention to anything in our environment.

Stress was initially seen in a negative light, but it actually serves an important function. Research has shown that stress can have some positive effects on performance and motivation [4]. It helps individuals adapt to challenges and strive to achieve their goals. Stress prepares the body to confront or escape from danger, getting us ready for action. However, when stress becomes chronic, it can lead to a variety of health

issues. Prolonged exposure to stress has been linked to conditions like anxiety, depression, and heart disease. It's crucial for individuals to find healthy ways to manage and reduce stress in order to maintain overall well-being. Chronic stress can weaken the immune system, increase the risk of developing hypertension and heart-related diseases, and also have a significant impact on mental health, making conditions such as depression and anxiety more prevalent [5].

### **Effects of Academic Stress on Learning**

In the academic journey, students face various demands related to their educational responsibilities, social engagements, and personal life. These demands often lead to stress, which can significantly impact a student's motivation, concentration, and sleep patterns. A crucial factor influencing how students perceive and manage stress is their self-concept. Self-concept encompasses an individual's perception of themselves across academic, social, and personal dimensions [6]. For example, students who view themselves as academically competent tend to approach academic challenges with resilience, while those who see themselves as less capable may feel overwhelmed, leading to stress. Similarly, students with a positive social self-concept navigate social situations more efficiently, while those with social anxiety may find such situations stressful.

The impact of academic stress is particularly noteworthy as it can affect learning and motivation. When students face academic pressures, they may exhibit behaviors such as procrastination, decreased effort, and a diminishing interest in the learning process itself [7]. These behaviors are often indicative of the overwhelming nature of the stress they are experiencing. Without adequate coping mechanisms, academic stress can create a cycle of anxiety and disengagement from academic pursuits.

However, students who possess or develop practical stress management skills tend to demonstrate greater resilience in the face of challenges [8]. They approach problems with perseverance, maintain a positive outlook, and view obstacles as opportunities for growth. These skills help mitigate the adverse effects of stress and contribute to a more fulfilling and successful academic experience. Managing stress is pivotal to a student's academic success and overall well-being. It involves a complex interplay of self-concept, coping strategies, and resilience, all of which significantly influence how a student navigates the pressures of academic life.

### **Causes of Undergraduate Student Stress**

Several factors can contribute to student stress:

- i) *Academic Pressure:* Academic pressure can stem from a multitude of sources, including high expectations from teachers, parents, and self-imposed standards [9]. Students often face significant levels of stress as a result of challenging workloads, complex assignments, and the constant pressure to consistently achieve top grades. This stress can manifest in various ways, impacting the mental and emotional health of students. It is imperative for educators and parents to remain aware of these pressures and offer support to students in effectively managing and coping with academic stress [10].
- ii) *Social Pressures:* During adolescence, individuals often feel the weight of social pressures as they navigate the complexities of conformity, friendship dynamics, and social anxiety. Expectations to fit into societal norms and meet certain standards can lead to feelings of unease and uncertainty [11]. Balancing intricate

social interactions, cultivating meaningful connections, and coping with the challenges of adolescence can be demanding, contributing to heightened stress levels for many young people [12].

- iii) *Time Management Challenges:* Time management can be difficult, particularly when juggling extracurricular activities, personal obligations, and academic obligations. This juggling act frequently results in tension and feelings of overwhelm.
- iv) *Financial Concerns:* Financial concerns, including the incredibly high cost of tuition, the challenge of covering living expenses, and the added pressure of balancing part-time work with academic responsibilities, can lead to significant stress and anxiety for many students [13]. Recognizing and addressing these financial worries is essential, and it's important for students to actively pursue support in managing the financial challenges that come with college life.
- v) *Performance Anxiety:* Performance anxiety is a psychological state that arises from the dread of failure or the pressure to excel in high-stakes circumstances such as examinations or presentations [14]. This anxiety can significantly contribute to stress levels among students, thus affecting their mental health and academic achievements.

### **The Role of Counselling in Reducing Student Stress**

Counselling offers a safe environment for students to gain insight into the causes of their stress and learn effective coping strategies [15]. It also provides a confidential space for students to talk about their emotions and worries, helping them develop emotional control and understanding. Additionally, counsellors offer evidence-based stress management and resilience-building practices such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), Relaxation Techniques, Biofeedback Therapy, Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) Therapy, Solution-Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT), Art Therapy, and Music Therapy [16]. These techniques help students manage immediate stress and provide lifelong skills for handling future challenges.

Counsellors, in close collaboration with students, identify the root causes of their stress and develop personalized treatment strategies. This approach significantly reduces the recurrence of stress and promotes long-term well-being. Group counselling and psychoeducational seminars, key components of stress reduction efforts on college campuses, provide a platform for students to connect with peers facing similar challenges, share experiences, and learn valuable stress-management techniques from one another, fostering a sense of support and connection [17].

### **Parental and Teacher Involvement in Addressing Student Stress**

Students' mental well-being is significantly affected by the growing demands of the academic landscape. Student stress, an escalating worry, can emerge as anxiety, sleep disturbances, and physical health ailments. In order to successfully tackle this difficulty, it is essential to have a cooperative endeavor involving both parents and instructors. Parents have a crucial role in establishing a secure and supportive home environment, creating practical goals, and encouraging beneficial behaviors such as consistent sleep patterns and physical exercise [18]. Parental involvement is the cornerstone of managing student stress because parents frequently provide their

children with their first source of support and have a significant influence on how they perceive and react to stressors [19]. Teachers have a vital role in dealing with student stress by identifying symptoms of stress and applying supportive measures. They have the ability to create a favourable classroom atmosphere, encourage active participation in academic tasks, and effectively handle stress by employing methods such as mindfulness exercises and relaxation techniques [20]. To enhance their influence, it is necessary to create a favorable environment, foster a sense of respect, use stress-reducing techniques, and recognize students' achievements beyond their academic success. This method has the potential to create a learning environment that is both positive and helpful for all students.

Effective collaboration between parents and teachers is crucial in establishing a united support system that places a high value on the welfare of students [21]. Frequent contact between parents and teachers facilitates the exchange of important ideas and observations concerning pupils' academic progress and emotional well-being. Parent-teacher conferences, communication channels, and parent-teacher groups facilitate the establishment of collaboration and conversation between parents and teachers. Through the exchange of information, the discussion of solutions, and the establishment of common objectives, parents and teachers may create customized ways to assist students in effectively managing stress and achieving academic success.

### **Stress to suicides**

Stress causes serious effects on mental health issues and, in extreme instances, can result in suicide. Some symptoms and stages precede suicide, such as

- i) *Mental Health Impact:* The long-term and continuous experience of stress can have significant consequences on mental health, potentially leading to the development of illnesses such as depression and anxiety [22]. Without treatment, it might result in the development of suicidal thoughts and actions. Continued anxiety can gradually diminish an individual's ability to handle daily obligations, causing even basic chores to become more challenging.
- ii) *Feelings of Hopelessness and Helplessness:* Stress can lead to feelings of hopelessness and helplessness. The brain's focus on the immediate threat makes it difficult to find solutions or imagine a way out, causing feelings of being lost in a maze. Stress hormones cause emotional exhaustion and overwhelm by impairing judgment and depleting mental and physical resources [23]. Some develop pessimistic thought patterns that make people believe that suicide is their only option.
- iii) *Impaired Cognitive Functioning:* Stress not only drains emotions, but it also seriously impairs reasoning. Stress impairs one's ability to perceive the broad picture or think of other options because the brain gives priority to the present threat [24]. The ability to critically evaluate the situation and make informed decisions is compromised by stress hormones like cortisol, which cause this cognitive tunnel vision. Stress has the potential to make people overestimate the severity of issues. Tragically, some people see suicide as a reasonable solution when their coping mechanisms are exhausted.

iv) *Isolation*: Stress-related isolation may increase one's risk of suicide. People are social beings that depend on relationships for resilience and emotional support. When these connections are damaged through isolation, a person's capacity to cope with stress decreases. People might feel overwhelmed by their problems without the consolation, direction, and understanding that come from social support, which raises the risk of suicidal thoughts [25]. When someone is alone, they can't find company or understanding, which leaves a void where suffering endures. Suicidal thoughts might arise because of the absence of meaningful interpersonal connection, which heightens sentiments of hopelessness and despair [26]. In order to address the intricate relationship between stress, isolation, and suicide risk, it is essential to acknowledge the role that counselling plays in promoting resilience and reducing stress.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

The methodology employed in this article adopts a qualitative approach, focusing on Counselling and stress disorder. The research design involves a critical examination of a wide range of secondary sources, such as medical research articles, academic psychology journal articles, medical blogs, and Government reports. The textual data from government reports and articles has been thoroughly analyzed to understand stress disorders and fatalities better. The research design aimed to explore the various consequences of stress disorders in order to provide practical insights for overcoming stress.

## RESULTS

Government reports and articles have been collected and analyzed. The findings reveal stress disorder is a common factor in today's world. Stress disorder increase the number of mental and physical health issues. In India, Suicide rates due to stress increased during the pandemic. According to research, the frequency of suicides in India generally exhibited a decline from 2010 to 2017, but this pattern reversed after this period, especially among males [27]. The highest increase after 2017 was noted in 2020 for both males and females. The following table shows the general causes, age, and gender-wise distribution of suicides in 2022 [28].

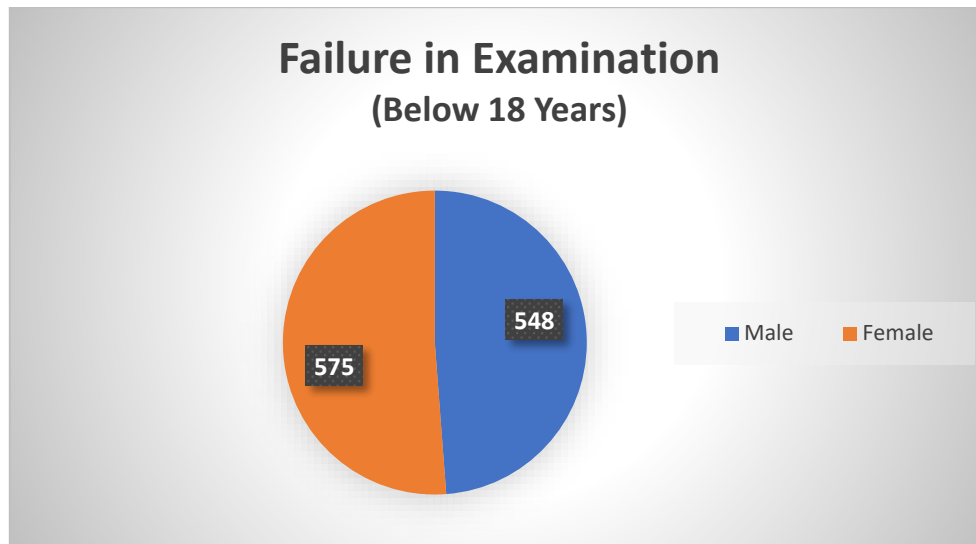
**Table 1: Data from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)**

Causes	Below 18 Years				18 to below 30 Years				31 to Below 45 Years			
	Male	Female	Transgender	Total	Male	Female	Transgender	Total	Male	Female	Transgender	Total
Failure in Examination	548	575	0	1123	546	370	0	916	43	12	0	55
Unemployment	22	11	0	33	1254	191	0	1445	1121	86	0	1207
Professional/ Career Problem	36	43	0	79	679	122	0	801	699	66	0	765
Bankruptcy or Indebtedness	12	11	0	23	1204	135	0	1339	2535	228	0	2763
Family Problems	1115	1441	0	2556	11504	7624	8	19136	14207	4729	2	18938
Illness	524	767	1	1292	4974	2521	6	7501	6215	2422	0	8637
Poverty	34	20	0	54	336	53	0	389	502	71	0	573
<b>Total</b>	<b>2291</b>	<b>2868</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5160</b>	<b>20497</b>	<b>11016</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>31527</b>	<b>25322</b>	<b>7614</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>32938</b>

The table above presents data on the number of suicides, including their causes, age, and gender. Academic-related causes are highlighted in the table. In today's world, unemployment is a fundamental source of various problems. In some cases,

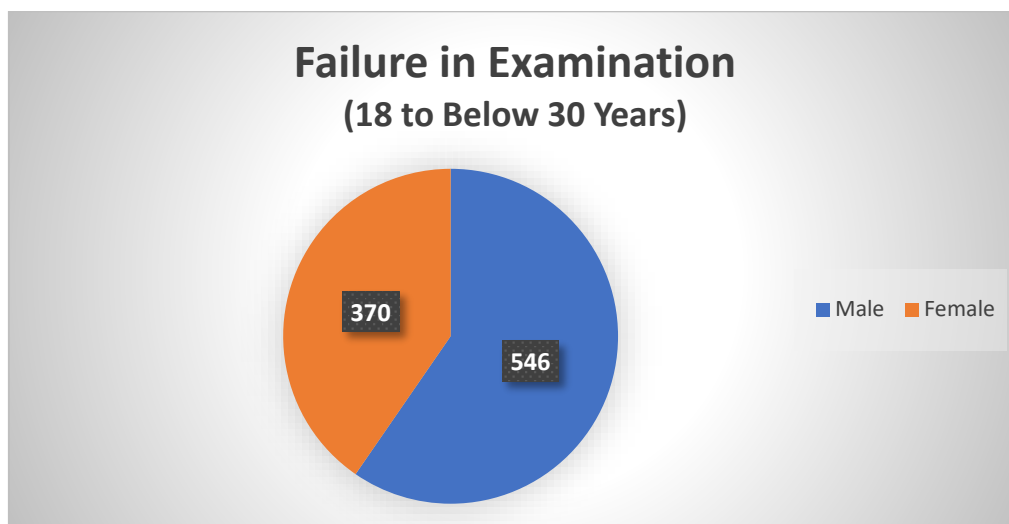
unemployment arises due to academic failure and difficulties in finding work. These challenges can lead to other issues, such as indebtedness, poverty, illness, and family problems.

**Figure 1: Suicides for Failure in Examination below 18 Years**



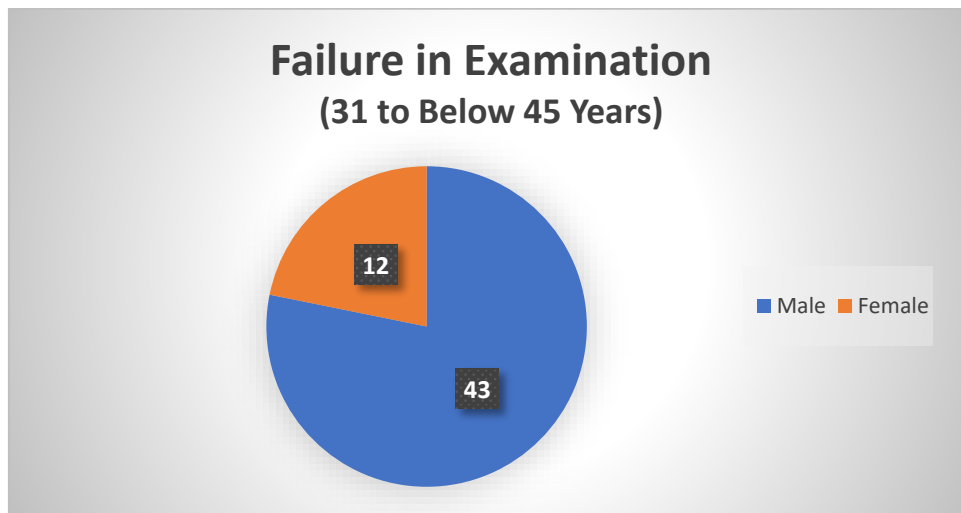
Failure in examinations is a major cause of suicide. Reports show that suicides due to examination failure start as early as the school stage. For example, on June 7, 2024, an 18-year-old aspiring student from Rewa, Madhya Pradesh, tragically took her own life [29]. The pie chart above indicates a total of 1123 suicides among individuals below the age of 18, with 548 being male and 575 being female.

**Figure 2: Suicides for Failure in Examination between 18-30 Years**



The pie chart above illustrates the suicide rates resulting from exam failure among individuals aged 18 to 30. This age range typically encompasses the college and employment years. The pie chart shows that a total of 916 suicides were committed because of the failure of examination, with 546 being male and 370 being female. Table 1 indicates that 1445 individuals committed suicide due to unemployment, while 801 people took their lives because of professional and career-related issues.

**Figure 3: Suicides for Failure in Examination between 30-45 Years**



The pie chart above displays the suicide statistics for individuals aged 31 to 45. It indicates a total of 55 suicides, with 43 being male and 12 being female. This age group experiences relatively fewer suicides compared to others, likely due to the fact that 31 to 45 is the prime employment age. Stress arising from unemployment and professional challenges appears to be a significant contributing factor. Furthermore, Table 1 shows that 1207 suicides were connected to unemployment, whereas 765 suicides were connected to issues with careers and the workplace.

## DISCUSSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Every year, 703,000 people die by suicide, and many more attempt it. Each suicide impacts families, communities, and countries and has lasting effects on those left behind. Suicide is a significant issue that spans all age groups, ranking as the fourth leading cause of death globally among 15–29-year-olds in 2019 [30]. Every problem has a solution, but stress often plays a significant role, leading to extreme outcomes such as suicide. There are various ways to effectively manage stress. To do so, it is important to first identify the root causes and then implement suitable coping mechanisms. An extensive support network comprising friends and family members can play a pivotal role in shielding individuals from the debilitating effects of stress [31]. Sharing one's feelings and experiences with empathetic and understanding individuals can bring about significant alleviation and contribute greatly to the process of healing and recovery.

Stress management involves setting realistic goals and limits, improving time management skills, and cultivating an optimistic mindset [32]. Setting realistic expectations and prioritizing tasks can prevent being overwhelmed and anxious. Practicing gratitude, positive self-talk, and mindfulness can shift focus towards positive aspects of life. Engaging in activities that bring joy and relaxation can also contribute to a positive outlook. Fundamental lifestyle adjustments, such as adopting a healthy diet, ensuring adequate sleep, and engaging in regular physical activity, are of the utmost importance. In addition, engaging in activities such as meditation, mindfulness, and deep breathing exercises can significantly improve our capacity to recognize and manage the physiological responses that our bodies have to stress. However, when stress becomes overwhelming, seeking professional help from therapists or counselors can be beneficial. These professionals can assess underlying factors

contributing to increased stress levels and provide tailored strategies for effective stress management. Their expertise can significantly help individuals cope with and overcome stress-related challenges.

### **A) Suggestions for Stress Management Classes for Undergraduate Students'**

Reports from National Crime Records Bureau (NCBR) and news articles show that stress is a disorder that starts from an early age. Stress disorder can be easily manageable with the right stress management techniques. Teaching stress management is very important for college and school students because knowing stress management techniques may reduce stress and suicides. Colleges and universities are slowly adding more types of counselling to their programs, such as yoga, meditation classes, art therapy, and nature-based activities. Incorporating stress management classes with counselling will become a holistic approach that not only helps reduce stress but also contributes to improving overall well-being by promoting balance, social connection, and self-care.

### **CONCLUSION**

The results and discussions presented earlier show that counselling is more effective in improving students' overall well-being. It has a significant impact on providing students with the skills and techniques necessary to effectively manage stress and succeed academically. Counselling helps students build resilience, cultivate positive self-beliefs, and deal with the difficulties of academic life by offering a safe environment for inquiry and intervention. Through collaborative efforts among parents, teachers, counsellors, and mental health professionals, students can receive support to achieve academic success and overall well-being.

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