

## STRESS AND ANXIETY AMONG VARIOUS POST GRADUATE STUDENTS IN KERALA DURING MANDATORY LOCKDOWN DUE TO COVID 19

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

The coronavirus outbreak came to light on December 31, 2019 when China informed the World Health Organisation of a cluster of cases of pneumonia of an unknown cause in Wuhan City in Hubei Province. Subsequently the disease spread to more Provinces in China, and to the rest of the world. The WHO has now declared it a pandemic. A pandemic is defined as “an epidemic occurring worldwide, or over a very wide area, crossing international boundaries and usually affecting a large number of people (*Bonneux L, Vam Damme W*). The virus has been named SARS-CoV-2 and the disease is now called *COVID-19*

The Government of India confirmed India's first case of [Coronavirus disease 2019](#) on 30 January 2020 in the state of [Kerala](#), when a university student from [Wuhan](#) travelled back to the state. Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that the only solution to control the spread of coronavirus was to break the cycle of transmission through [social distancing](#). He also added that the lockdown would be enforced more strictly. WHO executive director, Mike Ryan said that lockdowns alone will not eliminate coronavirus. He said that India must take necessary measures to prevent a second and third wave of infections. On 3 April 2020, Dr David Nabarro, who's special envoy on the disease, said that the "*Lockdown in India was early, far-sighted and courageous*" and was better than waiting for another 3 or 4 weeks

All sectors of the society got affected economically due to this lockdown during the first phase of lockdown itself. Now it is the second wave which is more contagious than the first wave and the citizens are again facing severe threats from the spread of the virus. The government is forced to impose another lockdown in order to reduce the impact of the spread of the virus.

Students are forced to attend online classes. Even though school students don't have the need to face the board exams. This is not the case with college students. The stress and anxiety faced by the students are high due to continuous online classes, assignments and other online works. Since everything is part of the curriculum students are left with no options of postponing the classes or examinations. They are forced to attend the classes and other related works even though they face personal problems due to the effect of covid-19 to their family members. Detaching themselves from their friends, family and other relatives when they are quarantined also cause mental stress to students along with their online classes. *Degree of isolation differ between individuals, ranging*

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*from physical (i.e., contact) or representative (i.e., separation from loved ones), and affect the human psyche*

## **OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

To find the impact of lockdown on the mental health of college students in Kerala

## **2. METHODS**

### **2.1 PARTICIPANTS AND PROCEDURE**

Data were drawn from a continuing online survey among PG students in Ernakulam District, Kerala. The sample population include both male and female students of first year and second year doing PG. A questionnaire was sent to students via e-mail inviting them to take part in the survey during the 2019- 2020 & 2020-2021 academic years. Participants were provided with a description of the study along with a questionnaire in the form of Google form.

The questionnaire consists of 2 parts

1. Socio-demographic characteristics
2. Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) of Sheldon Cohen<sup>1</sup>.

### **2.2 STUDY DESIGN**

The data for this study was obtained using a cross sectional survey which was distributed from April 18<sup>th</sup> to April 30<sup>th</sup> when the second lockdown was announced in Kerala.

An online survey was distributed using convenient sampling technique among the students doing different Post Graduate courses in various colleges in Kerala.

### **2.3 STATISTICAL ANALYSIS**

Statistical analysis was done using SPSS. categorical variables were expressed as percentage. Chi-square test was used to compare between perceived stress scales (low, moderate, high perceived stress).

## **3. RESULTS**

### **3.1 SOCIO DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES**

A total of 261 students responded to the survey. Table 1 represents the details of demographic variables.

Table :1 Socio demographic characteristics of respondents

	Low Stress n=32	Moderate Stress n=195	High Stress n=35	Total	p value
<b>Age groups</b>					
>20	0	1	0	1	
20-25	32	193	32	257	0.003
26-30	0	1	2	3	
<b>Gender</b>					
Male	11	61	14	86	
Female	21	134	20	175	0.001
<b>Marital Status</b>					
Unmarried	30	192	31	253	
Married	2	3	3	8	0.002
<b>Course Pursuing</b>					
MBA	10	117	15	142	
MHRM	6	3	2	11	
M.Com	1	6	3	10	
M A	2	26	2	30	0.001
MSc	4	12	2	18	
msw	7	20	6	33	
MCJ	2	11	4	17	

Source: computed data

### Chi-square test

Significant P value <0.05

Most of the respondents fall in the age group of 20-25 and the average age of the students is 21.37. Girl students form the major part of the respondents. Only a nominal percentage of students are married (3%). The maximum number of respondents were pursuing MBA (44.8%).

### 3.2 PERCEIVED STRESS LEVEL

Table 2 displays the responses to the 10 items of the Perceived stress scale provided by the participants.

Table 2: Responses to the perceived stress scale (N=261)

Perceived Stress Scale	never		almost never		some times		fairly often		often	
		%		%		%		%		%
In the last month, how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?	45	17.2	47	18	70	26.8	48	18.4	51	19.5
In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?	52	19.9	47	18	72	27.6	52	19.9	38	14.6
In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and "stressed"?	46	17.7	41	15.7	61	23.5	60	23.1	53	20
In the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems?	27	10.3	41	15.7	75	28.7	67	25.7	51	19.5
In the last month, how often have you felt that things were going your way?	44	16.9	56	21.5	74	28.4	46	17.6	41	15.7
In the last month, how often have you found that you could not cope with all the things that you had to do?	46	17.6	50	19.2	80	30.7	42	16.1	43	16.5
In the last month, how often have you been able to control irritations in your life?	35	13.4	43	16.5	79	30.3	57	21.8	47	18
In the last month, how often have you felt that you were on top of things?	51	19.5	53	20.3	77	29.5	47	18	33	12.6
In the last month, how often have you been angered because of things that were outside of your control?	43	16.5	45	17.2	78	29.9	55	21.1	40	15.3
In the last month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?	39	14.9	47	18	85	32.6	52	19.9	38	14.6

**Source : Computed primary data**

**PERCEIVED STRESS SCALE**

Table 2 represents the recorded responses based on the perceived stress scale. 75% of the students falls under the moderate stress level category while 12% low stress and 13 percentage high stress category (Table 3). 15% of the students' often felt difficulties were piling up and they could not overcome them. 23% of the respondents. 11% of the female students find it often they were felt on top of things and difficult to control their anger. Even though the percentage of married female students (3%) are comparatively low when compared with the total respondents, half of them falls under the high stress category since they find it very difficult to take care of their studies and household chores balanced.

Table 3: Total scores of the perceived stress scale (N =261).

Perceived stress scale	Frequency	(%)
Low stress	(0-13)	32 (12%)
Moderate stress	(14-26)	195 (75%)
High stress	(27-40)	35 (13%)

**Source : Computed primary data**

**INVESTIGATING STUDENTS' EMOTIONS AND ANXIETIES**

Varied responses from students relating to stress and anxiety were received from students. They found it difficult to studying, online examinations and assignments due to lack of proper time management. Most of the respondents spend more than 10-12 hours in front of laptop, tablet or mobile phone for online classes or other related academic works. For entertainment purposes like watching movies or playing games using these electronic devices, most of them are spending nearly an additional 3 hours. A main concern of their stress they shared is about placement after course completion. Syllabus completion and all related academic activities would happen online smoothly, but when coming for placements they find it difficult since their confidence level are low.

## CONCLUSION

This study showed moderate to high level of stress among post graduate students of various streams in the state of Kerala, India. Female students were more disposed to stress. Students finds it difficult to complete their academic related work due to inappropriate time management. The main reason for the high stress of students is concerned with their placement after studies. Counselling sessions or online stress management techniques are recommended to improve their mental strength and to prevent further psychological consequences.

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