

Depression, Anxiety and Stress among the Indian and Iranian Students

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The purpose of the paper is to understand and compare the experiences of Stress, Anxiety, and depression among the Indian and the Iranian students. The data is collected from students studying in different departments of University of Mysore, Mysore, studying post-graduate and Ph.D. degree courses. The sample comprised of 80 Indian and 80 Iranian, both male and female students. The Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS) is used to assess depression, anxiety and stress. It is hypothesized that the Depression, Anxiety and Stress level of Iranian students is higher than Indian students. The 2 x 2 x 3 ANOVA is used for statistical analysis. Interestingly, the findings revealed that the Depression, Anxiety and Stress level of Indian students are significantly higher than those of Iranian students. Furthermore gender differences are not found significant.

Keywords: Depression, Anxiety and Stress

Depression is characterized as a mood disorder. There are four sets of the symptoms of depression namely emotional, cognitive, motivation and physical. A person need not have all of these to be diagnosed as depressed but the more symptoms he or she has, and the more intense the individual is suffering from depression. Sadness and rejection are the most silent emotional symptoms of depression. The individual feels hopeless and unhappy, he/she often has caring spells and many contemplate suicide. Equally preserve is loss of gratification or pleasure in life. Activities that used to bring satisfaction become dull and joyless; the depressed person gradually loss interest in hobbies, recreation, and family activities. The depressed person has negative thoughts, low self-esteem, the feeling of the hopelessness about the future, loss of motivation, change in aptitude, sleep disturbance, and loss of energy. According to the International Foundation for Research and Education on Depression (2005), the three main types of depression are major depression, dysthymia,

and bipolar disorder. Depression is associated with a constellation of psychological, behavioral and physical symptoms as well (Cassano & Fava, 2002).

Anxiety is a subjective state of internal discomfort. Dread, and foreboding, which manifests itself in cognitive, behavioral, and physiological symptoms. It is a normal emotion with adaptive value, in that it acts as a warning system to alert a person to impending danger. Anxiety often occurs without conscious or apparent stimulus, which distinguishes it from fear (Gurian & Miner, 1991). Cognitive symptoms of anxiety include worrying, impaired attention, poor concentration, and memory problems. Physiological symptoms such as hyperventilation, sweating, diarrhea, trembling, and restlessness also occur. Anxiety may be focused on a specific object, situation, or activity (a phobia) or may be unfocused and expressed as a more general dread. The five major types being: Panic Disorder, Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Generalized

Anxiety Disorder and Phobias (Anxiety Disorders of America, 2005).

Stress is a consequence of or a general response to an action or situation that places special physical or psychological demands, or both, on a person. As such, stress involves an interaction of the person and the environment. The physical or psychological demands from the environment that cause stress are called stressors. Stressors can take various forms, but all stressors have one thing in common; in both situations it depends on the individual perception level.

In the University of Mysore there are more than 150 Iranian students studying in different subjects. Many years ago both countries have cultural communication as well as educational communication. Furthermore, those of Iranian students who want to immigrate for study purpose prefer to study at Indian universities because of several reasons such as Close cultural relationship; Geographically nearest than other countries; English language teaching; Long history of Indian universities; Recognition of Indian universities by Iranian government; Variety of courses, and Climate conditions.

In this paper the researcher has assumed that who are immigrating to other countries they may have high levels of depression, anxiety and stress so that they can adapt themselves in new environment, however the nature of immigration is anxious and stressful. Because of these reasons the researcher made an attempt to compare the differences between Indian and Iranian students on these factors.

Hypotheses:

1. There will be significant differences in DAS between the Indian and Iranian students.
2. Female students will have higher depression, anxiety and stress than male students

Method

Sample:

The sample is selected by using random sampling method. The sample consisted of post-graduate and Ph.D. students, 80 Indian and 80 Iranian students from different departments of the University of Mysore, Mysore. The Indian participants were (40 female and 40 male) 80 students. The age of the Indian participants ranged from 20 to 29 years, with the mean age of 22.66 years. Out of 80 students, 76 are post-graduates and remaining 4 are Ph.D. students. The Iranian participants were (40 female and 40 male) 80 students. Their age ranged from 22 to 53 years, with the mean age of 30.63 years. Out of 80 students, 47 are postgraduates and 33 are Ph.D. students.

Instruments:

Depression Anxiety Stress Scale by Lovibond and Lovibond (1995) is a 42-item self-report measure used to assess depression, anxiety and stress. Items on the DASS are rated on 4-point Likert - type, ranging from 0 (Did not apply to me at all) to 3 (Applied to me very much, or most of the time). The higher the scores on each subscale indicate more depression, anxiety and stress. Internal consistency has been demonstrated in clinical samples ($r=.71$; Brown, Chorpita, Korotitsch, & Barlow, 1997). Construct validity has been demonstrated with significant correlations between the Anxiety scale and Beck Anxiety Inventory ($r=.81$) and between the Depression scale and Beck Depression Inventory ($r=.74$; Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995). The DASS has been found to be a reliable and valid method for assessing client changes in depressive mood and anxiety (Antony, Bieing, Cox, Enns, & Swinson, 1998; Brown et al., 1997; Clara, Cox, & Enns, 2001). The higher the score on each subscale, the more distressed the individual.

Results and Discussion

Table 1: Mean and SD scores of Indian and Iranian students on DASS and F values.

Country	Gender	Components of DASS								
		Depression			Anxiety			Stress		
		Mean	SD	F value	Mean	SD	F value	Mean	SD	F value
India	Male	15.78	9.85	21.57**	15.40	8.79	39.5**	17.20	8.77	21.48**
	Female	11.83	7.51		13.55	7.29		15.18	8.21	
Iran	Male	7.38	7.47	1.72	8.25	7.75	3.26	11.38	7.52	2.89
	Female	7.83	8.70		5.83	5.79		9.05	7.79	
Total	Male	11.58	9.66	2.72	11.83	8.99	0.06	14.29	8.63	0.01
	Female	9.83	8.32		9.69	7.61		12.11	8.53	

**p<.001

From the table 1, it is clear that Indian students had significantly ($F=21.57$; $P<.001$) higher depression scores than Iranian students. The mean depression scores for Indian and Iranian students were 13.80 and 7.60 respectively. Gender-wise comparison revealed a non-significant difference between male and female students indicating equal levels of depression between them. The interaction effect between country and gender was also found to be non-significant indicating that the pattern of depression is same for male and female students irrespective of the country they belong to.

As in the case of depression, in anxiety also Indian students had significantly ($F=39.50$; $P<.001$) higher scores than Iranian students. The mean anxiety scores for Indian and Iranian students were 14.48 and 7.04 respectively. However, male and female students did not differ significantly in their anxiety scores as the obtained F value failed to reach significance level criterion. The interaction effect between country and gender was also found to be non-significant indicating that the pattern of anxiety is same for male and female students irrespective of the country they belong to.

In stress scores, it was found that Indian students were significantly ($F=21.48$; $P<.001$) more stressful than Iranian students (means 8.50 and 7.69 respectively for Indian and

Iranian students). Gender-wise a non-significant difference was observed between male and female students. Lastly, the interaction effect between country and gender was also found to be non-significant, revealing that the pattern of stress was same for male and female students of any country they belong to. From the above results, one can say that Hypothesis 1 is accepted, as there was significant difference between Indian and Iranian students in their Depression, anxiety and stress scores and Hypothesis 2 is rejected as there was no gender difference in depression, stress and anxiety between male and female students.

Some degree of stress is helpful for individuals in meeting the new challenges, but persistently high and unrelieved stress can lead to psychological, physical and behavioral ill health. Several factors related to the outcome of stress, such as life -style change, financial pressures, grades, castes, loneliness, love and sex etc. From the mean age comparisons it is clear that Indian sample had a lower mean age than Iranian sample, one can assume that being higher in age Iranian sample may have low level of stress. Simons, Aysan, Thompson, Hamarat, & Steele (2002) indicated a significant correlation between economic well-being and life satisfaction in university students. If students were faced with financial pressures,

they reported lower life satisfaction and greater perceived stress. Many researchers consider unemployment as a powerful source of stress in this group (i.e., Ager & MacLachlan, 1998; McNamara, 2000a). Uncertainty regarding future work situations can cause stress for young men. If young men fail to find employment, they might become disaffected, frustrated, and rebel against society. Furthermore, there is a link between youth unemployment and poor psychological adjustment and social isolation (i.e., Roberts, Golding, Towell, & Weinreb, 1999). There is also some evidence which has shown that finding difficulty in one's first employment situation can aggravate the identity formation process, increasing negative outcomes, and impeding positive self esteem (McNamara, 2000b).

Financial pressure is also one of the major stressor to university students. The tremendous pressure from not only paying university expenses, books, registration fees, tuition fees, but also from accommodation, essentials one's, such as fashion items, electronic equipments, etc. The per capita income of India as on 2007 is Rs. 32,299 rupees (Economic Times, 2008), whereas for Iran it is 4,92,000 rupees. When compared the level of financial aspects of the Indian and Iranian students at the University of Mysore, Iranian students have better financial support than Indian students, because they are immigrated for higher education which might lead to lower level of stress. Financial aspects can also cause depression, which according to several studies have found that there is a negative relationship between financial strain and depression. Especially, lower income is associated with the depressive symptomatology (Blazer, Hughes, & Fowler, 1989). O'Hara, Kohout, and Wallace (1985) in their study over 2100 elderly community residents, Kennedy (1989) and his colleagues found a "highly significant" inverse relationship: as income increased the prevalence of depression decreases.

Another factor may have positive relationship with stress for university student is the grade. Grades are very important for university students. Greenberg (1996) reported that seven in eight students were concerned with their grades. Abouserie (1994) pointed out that source of evaluation stress in university students were academic stress, examination, and results. The Indian students try very hard to get high grades than the Iranian students. The students of Iran get good opportunities which is not so in Indian scenario. This also may lead to high level of stress among Indian students. Love and sex can be an important source of satisfaction, but at the same time, a common source of stress and worry. Anxiety, guilt, frustration, being in love, is very much a part of collegiate life. According to Knox, Schacht, & Zusman (1999), 94 % of the sample group had experienced a love relationship.

However, there are no gender differences are observed. Male and female students equally experience the depression, anxiety and stress irrespective of the countries. These findings can be used to counseling the Indian students on the discussed factors and also for further study.

To conclude, one finds that Indian students had higher levels of depression, stress and anxiety as compared to Iranian students. Many factors are responsible for these increased negative aspects among Indian students, where educationists, policy makers and others associated should plan proper remedial measures to counter the ill effects.

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