

# Assessment of Depression, Anxiety and Stress of the students: A comparative study between disability and non-disability students at higher education level

Abhijit Biswas

Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Education, Jadavpur University, Jadavpur, India

## ARTICLE DETAILS

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### \*Corresponding Author

Email: [abhijitbiswas92\[at\]gmail.com](mailto:abhijitbiswas92[at]gmail.com)

## ABSTRACT

*Psychological distress (in the form of depression, anxiety, and stress) among disabled and non-disabled students at higher education level is prevalent and increasing. In most cases, higher education students with mental health issues are not seeking treatment. Main objective of the study, to find out the rate of prevalence in depression among the disabled and non-disabled students at higher education level in West Bengal. And the hypothesis is There is no significant difference between disability and non- disability in depression, Anxiety and stress among the student at higher education level. The present study is a cross sectional survey among the students at higher education level using The Depression, Anxiety and stress Scale (DASS-21) obtaining necessary permission from the heads of respective colleges and Universities. 150 samples (Disabled and non-disabled) were collected and the purposive sampling technique was used in this study. students with disabilities experience a greater degree of depression than non-disability students; and the difference was found statistically significant. On the other hand, it was also found that the disability students were suffering from high levels of anxiety and here too, difference the rate of prevalence of anxiety was statistically significant. The disabled students are also needed to screen students for mental health problems and provide counseling as needed.*

## 1. Introduction

Higher education is a very important period in students' life when students suffering from different mental health problems. Student's life was become depressing and sadness Due to Family problems, various type of disability, a heavy study etc. Depression and anxiety are common, serious and debilitating mental health problems and are afflicting students' life and student population to a large extent.

Defining disability is not an easy task, and it is becoming clear that no single definition can cover all aspects of disabilities. According to the International Classification of Impairment, Disability and Handicap (ICIDH, 1980), disability is interference with activities of the whole person in relation to the immediate environment. Within the ambit of the definition of disability under the Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995, mental illness means a 'disorder of the mind that results in partial or complete disturbance in the person's thinking, feeling and behaviour which may also result in recurrent or persistent inability or reduced ability to carry out activities of daily living, self-care, education, employment and participation in social life'. Disability associated with mental illness is a major contributor to the global burden of disease. As per the National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO, 1991) statistics, 1.9% of India's population is disabled in one way or the other. Mental health is how we think, feel, and act as we cope with life. People with disabilities report higher rates of stress and depression than people without disabilities. There are different ways to treat depression. Exercise can be effective for some people. Counseling or medication also might be needed.

## 2. Significance of the study:

Most of the students in higher education suffer from mental health problems. Moreover, if different kinds of new barriers are created between them, the mental condition of these students. If there is so much mental inconsistency among the non-disabled students, then the backward students i.e. the students with disabilities will more face depression, anxiety and stress. So if this incompatibility occurs between both able and disabled students, there must be a difference in their mental state. But what is the difference and what is the significance of it? There is no research paper in higher education to clarify this idea.

There was no earlier evidence investigating the prevalence, frequency and severity levels of **depression, anxiety and stress among university students: A comparative study between Disabled and non-Disabled students at higher education level in West Bengal**. There are currently many colleges and universities in the West Bengal. Therefore, an attempt was made to investigate the mental health problems among this sample.

## 3. Objective of the study:

- The study was conducted with the following objectives -
- To find out the rate of prevalence of Depression, Anxiety and Stress among the students at higher education level.
  - To find out the difference (rate of prevalence) between disabilityd and non-disabilityd students at higher education level in Depression, Anxiety and Stress.

## 4. Hypothesis of the Study:

In view of the research objectives, the following Null-Hypotheses are formulated -

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant difference between disability and non- disability in depression among the student at higher education level.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant difference between disability and non- disability in stress among the student at higher education level.

**H<sub>03</sub>:** There is no significant difference between disability and non- disability in anxiety among the student at higher education level.

## 5. Material and Methods:

The present study is a cross sectional survey among the students at higher education level using The Depression, Anxiety and stress Scale (DASS-21) obtaining necessary

permission from the heads of respective colleges and Universities. The survey was conducted in 10 colleges and 4 different Universities from five different districts of West Bengal.

**5.1 Sample:** The study sample consisted of a total number of 150 (70 disabled and 80 non-disabled) students at higher education level studying in under-graduate and post-graduate in the age group of 17 to 24 years. The purposive sampling technique was used in this study. The detail of gender and ability (disability and non-disability) wise distribution of the students under study is given in table 1:

**Table 1**  
Gender and ability wise sample distribution

		category of Ability of the students		Total
		Disability	Non-disability	
Gender	Male	52	22	74
	Female	18	58	76
Total		70	80	150

## 5.2 Statistical Analysis:

Raw data of 150 disabled and non-disabled students gathered were individually tabulated in excel sheet. Data was analyze using statistical package for social science (SPSS Package) version 20.0.

group of 17 to 24 years of five different districts in West Bengal. The rate of prevalence of depression, Anxiety and Stress of the students at higher education level are given in table 2:

**Objective – i : The rate of prevalence of depression, Anxiety and Stress**

## 6. Results:

The study was conducted on a total number of 150 students at higher education level; out of which 70 (46.67%) were disability and 80 (53.33%) were non-disability of the age

**Table 2**  
Rate of prevalence of depression, Anxiety and Stress (in percentage)

Level	Depression	Anxiety	Stress
Normal	25.3	8.7	50.7
Mild	14.7	15.3	18.0
Moderate	34.0	44.7	12.0
Severe	20.7	19.3	14.7
Extremely Severe	5.3	12.0	4.7

Out of total 150 students under the study 5.3% and 20.7% students showed extremely severe and severe level score (DASS-21) in depression. This indicates that means they fall under the abnormal category and which may have definite problem in coping with difficulties of daily life. Another 34% student's score showed in moderate level of depression.

From the above tability-2 it was found that 12% & 19.3% student showed extremely severe & severe level of anxiety according to DASS-21. This indicates that they were fall under highest level of anxiety; rest of the students showed low level of anxiety that means they have usually a good thing.

Out of the total students (N=150), 4.7% showed extremely severe level of stress and 14.7% showed severe level of stress according to DASS-21. Which indicated that they were fall under the highest level of stress i.e. this students have need interventions another; 12% students showed moderate level of stress.

**Objective – ii: Difference (rate of prevalence) between disable and non-disable students at higher education level in Depression, Anxiety and Stress.**

**Table 3**  
**depression, Anxiety and Stress level in DASS-21 (in percentage)**

Level	Depression		Anxiety		Stress	
	Disability	Non-Disability	Disability	Non-Disability	Disability	Non-Disability
Normal	15.71%	33.75%	34.29%	65%	8.57%	8.75%
Mild	11.43%	17.5%	24.29%	12.5%	15.71%	15%
Moderate	38.57%	30%	21.42%	3.75%	48.57%	41.25%
Severe	28.57%	13.75%	15.71%	13.75%	17.14%	21.25%
Extremely Severe	5.71%	5%	4.29%	5%	10%	13.75%

Among the disabled students attending higher education, 5.71% showed extremely severe and another 28.57% fall in the severe level in depression, whereas 5% non-disability students studying in higher education fall under very high score with another 13.75% as severe score.

It is observed from the above table only 4.29% & 15.71% disability students have fall under the extremely severe and severe level of anxiety: on the other hand 5% & 13.75% Students have shown extremely severe and severe level of anxiety. Also 21.42% disability students showed moderate level

of anxiety and 3.75% non-disability students showed the same level of anxiety. Here too, the disability students were suffering from high levels of anxiety.

But the non-disability students were suffering from a lot of stress; that is to say, 13.75% & 21.25% non-disability students showed extremely severe and severe level of Stress, where the extremely severe and severe stress level are 10% & 17.14%.

**6.1 Hypothesis Testing:** The following hypothesizes (H<sub>01</sub>-H<sub>03</sub>) are tested –

**Table 4**  
**Hypothesizes testing (H<sub>01</sub>-H<sub>03</sub>)**

VARIABILITY		DEPRESSION	ANXIETY	STRESS
ABILITY (Disability/Non-disability)	Df	4	4	4
	$\chi^2$	10.543	19.694	1.225
	Level of sig.	0.032	0.001	0.874
	Remarks	S (P<0.05)	S (P<0.01)	NS (P>0.05)

**Testing of H<sub>01</sub>:** It has been observed from the above chi-square table, the calculate value of  $\chi^2$  is greater than the critical values of  $\chi^2$  at the 5% level of significance. So the null hypothesis cannot be accepted. Therefore, there is a significant difference between disabled and non-disabled students at higher education in depression.

**Testing of H<sub>02</sub>:** It has been observed from the above chi-square table, the calculate value of  $\chi^2$  is greater than the critical values of  $\chi^2$  at the both level. So the null hypothesis cannot be accepted. Therefore, there is a significant difference between disabled and non-disabled students at higher education in anxiety.

**Testing of H<sub>03</sub>:** It has been observed from the above chi-square table, the calculate value of  $\chi^2$  is smaller than the critical values of  $\chi^2$ . So the null hypothesis can be accepted. Therefore, there is no significant difference between disabled and non-disabled students at higher education in stress.

**7. Discussion:**

The main objective of the study was to provide a generalized assessment of Depression, Anxiety and Stress among the students at higher education level and to provide a comparative status between disable and non-disabled students. In this study showed that 5.3% and 20.7% students showed extremely severe and severe level score (DASS-21) in depression. This indicates that means they fall under the abnormal category and which may have definite problem in coping with difficulties of daily life. Again 12% & 19.3% student showed extremely severe & severe level of anxiety according

to DASS-21. This indicates that they were fall under highest level of anxiety. Moreover, 4.7% showed extremely severe level of stress and 14.7% showed severe level of stress according to DASS-21. This indicated that they were fall under the highest level of stress. This rate is lower than 8.6%, 46.8% in Depression and Anxiety, but in stress that rate is higher than 2.8% of the study made in Pakistan (Saba, A. et. el. June, 2020).

In comparison, students with disabilities experience a greater degree of depression than non-disability students; and the difference was found statistically significant. On the other hand, it was also found that the disability students were suffering from high levels of anxiety and here too, difference the rate of prevalence of anxiety was statistically significant.

**8. Conclusion:**

The students at higher education level have a sense of identity and self worth, and ability to be productive and to learn, and a capacity to tackle developmental challenges and use cultural resources to maximize growth. Moreover, the good mental health of children and adolescents is crucial for their active social and economic participation”, (WHO, 2001). Depression, anxiety and stress are an illness where the feelings of depression persist and intervene with the child or adolescent’s functional abilities.

Early interventions are needed over time to improve quality of life and reduce frustration and anxiety. Multiple factors like feeling of incompetence, lack of motivation to learn and difficulty of class work might act as sources of the stressors

that may precipitate depression, anxiety and stress. We want to conclude by saying that disability in the form of depression, anxiety and stress are existing in high rate among the students at higher education level that require early intervention.

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