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## **MENTAL HEALTH OF STUDENTS OF GOMEL STATE MEDICAL UNIVERSITY: AN ANALYSIS USING DASS-21**

### ***Introduction***

As per the WHO, Mental health is a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community. It is an integral component of health and well-being that underpins our individual and collective abilities to make decisions, build relationships and shape the world we live in. Throughout our lives, multiple individual, social and structural determinants may combine to protect or undermine our mental health. Exposure to unfavorable social, economic, geopolitical and environmental circumstances – including poverty, violence, inequality and environmental deprivation – also increases people’s risk of experiencing mental health conditions.

In a challenging course such as medicine, the risk of developing stress, anxiety and depression among other conditions is certainly increased. Levels can vary due to different factors like monetary debt, peer pressure, poor academic performance, lack of sleep and may be even be due to interpersonal issues. The global prevalence rate of anxiety among medical students was 33.8% [1]. About one in three medical students globally have anxiety-a prevalence rate which is substantially higher than the general population. Student mental health concerns can manifest in several forms. Generally, medical students carry an increased burden of depression, anxiety, and mental stress compared to nonmedical peers of the same age [3].

The Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS 21, Psychology Foundation of Australia) was used to screen mental health problems among the population. The DASS 21 is a 21 item self report questionnaire devised to measure and assesses the severity of a range of symptoms common to depression, anxiety and stress. However, it is not a categorical measure of clinical diagnoses of the said conditions [2].

### ***Goal***

To analyze and examine the level and possible reasons of depression, stress, and anxiety among medical students of Gomel State Medical University with the DASS-21 and how they vary in different groups.

### ***Material and methods of research***

The study was conducted in Gomel State Medical University and all the participants were students of this university. The examined group had a total of 80 participants comprising of students aged between 17 to 24 from Russian faculties as well as English Faculty. The study was performed by administering a self-questionnaire with the questions in accordance with the DASS-21. The test consists of 21 questions across three parameters namely, Depression, Anxiety, and Stress where the participants had to answer each question on a scale based system. Informed verbal consent was obtained from all the participants beforehand.

### ***The results of the research and their discussion***

The test results can be separated into three different sections, one for each parameter of the DASS-21. Each parameter has a result based on the final points from one of the following categories: Normal, Mild, Moderate, Severe and Extremely Severe (table 1).

Table 1 – Results of DASS-21 parameters in participants according to gender

Levels	Depression			Anxiety			Stress		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
Normal	9 (56%)	23 (39%)	32 (42%)	8 (50%)	21 (36%)	29 (39%)	8 (50%)	21 (36%)	29 (39%)
Mild	3 (19%)	12 (20%)	15 (20%)	3 (19%)	4 (7%)	7 (9%)	7 (44%)	10 (17%)	17 (23%)
Moderate	1 (6%)	10 (17%)	11 (15%)	3 (19%)	12 (20%)	15 (20%)	1 (6%)	15 (25%)	16 (21%)
Severe	2 (13%)	6 (10%)	8 (11%)	1 (6%)	8 (14%)	9 (12%)	0	9 (15%)	9 (12%)
Extremely Severe	1 (6%)	8 (14%)	9 (12%)	1 (6%)	14 (23%)	15 (20%)	0	4 (7%)	4 (5%)

We will discuss all the parameters independently.

1. Depression: From a total of 75 students, 32 reported as normal. 15 participants were found to have mild level of depression. 11 were reported as moderate and for severe and extremely severe, it was found to have 8 and 9 respondents respectively. It may be noted that females tended to have Mild to Moderate level of depression whereas Severe was more common in males. In this parameter, only 37% of foreign students reported some level of depression. On contrary to this, around 74% of the local students tended to have some sort of stress level in their life.

2. Anxiety: 29 participants out of the 75 were reported with normal findings, whereas the others were divided as 7 for Mild, 15 for Moderate, 9 for Severe and 15 for Extremely Severe levels of Anxiety. It may be interesting to note that across all levels, more females tended to have anxiety as compared to males with 61% of females reporting some level of anxiety against 50% of males with any level of anxiety. 74% of local students were found to have some level of anxiety whereas only 47% of foreign students were found out to have some level of anxiety.

3. Stress: In this category, 29 participants had the result as normal, and the rest were divided as follows. 17 for Mild, 16 for Moderate, 9 for Severe and for Extremely Severe. High stress was predominantly reported in Females with no males reporting Severe or Extremely Severe stress levels. It can also be pointed out that 55% of foreign students had some level of stress compared to 82% of the local students (figure 1).

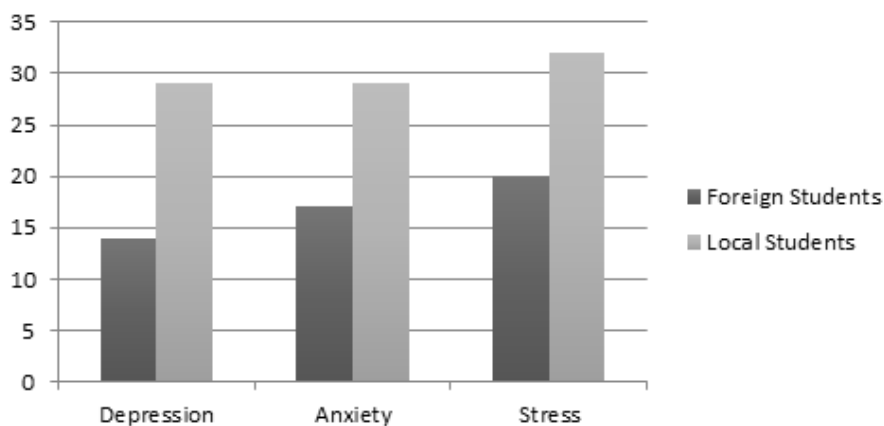


Figure 1 – Comparison of Parameters between local and foreign students

### Conclusion

From the above results and discussion, we can conclude that a major percent of medical students suffer from some sort and level of mental disturbance. Female students are observed to be more prone to depression, anxiety and stress as compared to their male counterparts.

It is also an interesting point to be made that local students are seen to be far more susceptible to mental health disturbances than foreign students despite many challenges faced by the latter.

Nevertheless, it is pertinent to note that a large number of medical students are susceptible to mental health disorders. This may be attributed to an individual's financial situation, intense academics, peer pressure and lifestyle factors such as living conditions, food habits, tobacco and alcohol consumption and numerous other factors. It is important for institutions to have safe spaces for students who feel their mental health being affected so that they can manage it properly without any repercussions.

#### LITERATURE

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