Depression among Post Graduate Students of Assam: A Case Study

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Abstract

Adjustment in university life refers to a person's ability to adjust to the university environment. Because of adjustment issues such as depression, not all university entering students are able to complete their degree within a reasonable time frame. The purpose of this paper is to investigate depression among Assam University postgraduate students, as well as gender and geographical disparities. A sample of 562 post-graduate students is chosen at random for the study using basic random sampling. The Beck Depression Inventory is used to distinguish between depressed and non-depressed individuals. For studying gender differences in depression, the independent sample t-test is utilized. The study found that postgraduate students, regardless of gender, had a higher level of depression symptoms. It discovered that postgraduate female students had a higher risk of depression than male students.

Keywords: *Adjustment problems, Beck Depression Inventory, Depression, t-test.*

Introduction :-

Every day, modern civilization makes life more complicated and incompatible. One must tinker with their situation in order to live a happy or pleasurable existence. In order to build a healthy personality, a person must accommodate himself/herself to the surroundings. A more adaptable nature leads to a more joyous and healthy existence, whereas a less adaptable nature inevitably leads to a more miserable and sick life. Only when a person is well adjusted can be alive without anxiety. As a result, adjustment is quite important in one's life.

Life is an adjustment process. It begins with the birth of the kid and continues until death. Adolescents are more likely than others to have adjustment issues, loneliness, and depression. After finishing secondary school, the majority of pupils seek admission to universities and other higher education institutions. Adolescents may find the transfer to higher education to be a life-changing event. On the one hand, individuals must adjust to their own personality changes, while on the other; they must adjust to the changing socioeconomic situation. Students in higher education are at risk of acquiring mental health concerns such as excessive anxiety and depression as a result of the difficulties they confront when adjusting to these life transitions. Owens et al. (2012) discovered that anxiety, despair, and nervousness are all connected to academic performance. The emergence of depressive symptoms may have a major impact on students' ability to accomplish academic requirements successfully. Anson et al. (1984) discovered that students' anxiety was inversely connected to their grades. According to Singh (2011)'s research, most university students face academic stress in order to study, complete their assignments, and engage in numerous activities due to an imbalance between environment and demand. According to Porter (1990), the majority of university students did not complete their courses and left the institution due to their incapacity to cope with the environment. According to Steinberg and Darling (1994), the majority of university students who sought mental health services reported anxiety, depression, and academic issues.

Need and Significance of the problem:

Student life is the most joyful time of one's life, as well as a time for psychosocial growth. Due to tight schedules, the new environment, tests, interpersonal relationships with professors and fellow

students, and late adolescent age, most students are experiencing a variety of challenges during this period. Furthermore, for many young adults, attending a higher education institution is one of the first major life transformations. Adjustment in university life refers to a person's ability to adjust to the university environment, which includes a variety of educational and co-curricular activities, while regulating anxiety and depression. There is a barrier between their home environment and the educational environment. Because of adjustment issues such as anxiety and depression, only half of new university students complete their degrees within a year, while the other half drop out (Wintre and Bowers, 2007). As a result, it is critical to identify which factors are responsible for students' poor adjustment within the university setting, as well as to examine how anxiety and depression influence students and how they differ based on gender disparities. Thus, it would be beneficial to investigate and comprehend anxiety and depression among university students, as well as to investigate the disparities in anxiety and sadness between girls and boys.

Methodology:

The study sample consists of 562 randomly selected post-graduate students using stratified random sampling method from different post graduate academic departments of Assam University of Assam.

A semi-structured questionnaire is developed for collecting information about student respondents' i.e. name, age, gender, residential area, etc.

The present study used the questionnaire developed by Beck, et al. (1961). The researcher developed a 21 item self-reporting scale inventory which examines characteristics attitudes and symptoms of depression. It consists of 4 point rating scale with values from 0 to 3. The score ranges from 0 to 63 and the higher score represents the severe the symptoms of depression. The cut-offs for the various categories of depression are: a score of "0-13" interpreted as minimal depression, "14-19" interpreted as mild depression, "20-28" interpreted as moderate depression and "above 29" interpreted as severe depression. Internal consistency for the BDI ranges from 0.73 to 0.92 with a mean of 0.86. The BDI demonstrates high internal consistency, with alpha coefficients of 0.86 and 0.81 for psychiatric and non-psychiatric populations respectively. Independent sample *t*-test is used to examine the gender differences on depression.

Variables of the study:

In this study, two types of variable viz. independent and dependent are considered which are given below:

a. **Independent Variables:** "Gender of the respondents" i.e., boys and girls are considered as independent variable.
b. **Dependent Variables**: "Depression among university student" are considered as dependent variable.

Results and Discussion:

Collected data has been arranged according to the purpose of the study and then tabulated properly for the analysis.

Mean and Standard deviation (S.D.) scores on BDI:

a) Boys and girls scores on BDI:

Table-1: Mean and Standard deviation scores of Boys & Girls on BDI

Boys		Girls	
Mean	**Standard Deviation**	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**
16.66	4.86	19.04	6.73

Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation scores of boys and girls for the study variable depression. The study revealed that mean depression level for boys is 16.66 with standard deviation 4.86 whereas girls mean depression level is 19.04 with standard deviation 6.73. It indicates that on an average, boys are very low in depression as compared to girls. The result may be due to the reason that Boys are careless, rely more on their friends and they keep busy on themselves. Moreover, the study carried out by Kasinath (1990), Pradhan (1993) and Singh (1995) found that boys are well adjusted in the areas of adjustment.

It is also observed that on average girls scores are high in depression as compared to that of boys. The given result could be due to the reason that girls are soft hearted and they think more in every situation. A numbers of studies conducted in this dimension support this finding. In the study of Mcwhitner (1997) and Pathak (1970) found that female student faced more problems in adjustment.

b) Locality wise scores on BDI:

Table-2: Mean and Standard deviation scores of Rural & Urban student on BDI

Rural		**Urban**	
Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
22.08	5.14	13.52	2.99

Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviation scores of rural and urban students for the study variable. The mean and S.D. score on depression for rural students are 22.08 and 5.14 respectively. It indicates that on an average, rural students have moderate depression as indicated in score interpretations card. This is may be due to the reason that rural students have to adjust themselves in a very new and unknown situation after enrolling in universities.

On the other hand, the mean and standard deviation scores of urban students for the studied variable as depression are 13.52 and 2.99 respectively. From this study, it is observed that on average urban student's scores is less in depression as compared to rural students. This result could be due to the reason that urban students are mostly familiar with the life of a university student.

Independent t-test result and interpretation:

Table 3 shows the comparative results of depression status of boys and girls. The researcher applied independent t test to examine the significant difference of mean depression between boys and girls. It is assumed that there is no significant difference between mean depression level of boys and girls.

a) t-value of Depression scores on BDI:

Table-3: Mean, SD and t-value of Depression Scores on BDI in Boys and Girls

Variable	**Gender**	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**	**Calculated t- value**	**p-value**	**Significance (at 5% level)**
Depression	Boys	16.66	4.86	2.026	0.04	Yes
	Girls	19.04	6.73			

From table 3, it is observed that calculated value of t is 2.026 and the p-value is 0.04 which is less than 0.05. So, we may reject our assumption and it may be conclude that boys and girls differ on the measure of depression. Girls have higher scores on BDI than boys. It indicates girls report more depressive symptom than boys. Similarly, the study carried out by Kessler et al., (1994)

reported that women in the United States are about two-thirds more likely than men to be depressed and a national psychiatric morbidity survey in Britain showed a similar greater risk of depression for women. The possible reasons of this gender disparity in depression may be the poor and negative self-concept, which could directly contribute along with more negative life events experienced by women to the differential rate of depression in men and women.

b) Locality wise t-value of depression scores on BDI:

Table 4 shows the depression level of the students based on their locality. It is assumed that there is no significant difference between the rural and urban students on depression.

Table-4: Mean, SD and t-value of depression Scores on BDI of rural and urban students

Variable	Gender	Mean	Standard Deviation	Calculated t- value	p-value	Significance (at 5% level)
Depression	Rural	22.08	5.14	9.86	0.001	Yes
	Urban	13.52	2.99			

From the Table 4, it is observed that calculated t-value is 9.86 and the p-value is 0.001 which is less than 0.05. Therefore, we may reject our assumptions and the result reveals that there is a significant difference between rural and urban students on the measure of depression. From mean scores it is found that rural students are more depressed than urban students. This difference may be due to poor financial conditions of rural students, family and unavailability of proper facilities in rural areas.

Conclusion:

The present study revealed relatively higher level of depressive symptoms in post graduate students irrespective of gender, but not equally. It revealed higher rate of depression among post graduate girl students than boys. The study also concluded that on the basis of residential background (urban and rural) post graduate students differ significantly in depression.

No research is conclusive in real sense and every research paves the way for future research. The present study is confined to Assam University only. It can be expand to more universities for broader generalization. Similar research can be conducted in other states of India to study the adjustment problems of post graduate students.

Rather than using scales to identify depression among students, brief interview and qualitative methods can be improve to understand the affecting factors. Diagnosing on the basis of numbers as done on scales like Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) may not give clinically significant information because of the issues like false positive and false negative. Moreover future research in this direction should focus on interventions that help to overcome students' adjustment problems.

Recommendations:

Adjustment is a very important aspect as it is a process by which an individual learns certain ways of behaviour to deal with situation. Only adjustable persons can make their life successful. So it is important to learn various mechanisms which can help in adjustment. Since the adjustment problem starts with the starting of the adolescent period, there is a strong need to start professional counseling and psychotherapy for students of educational institutions to cater their emotional needs and to help them cope with the academic and other pressures of day to day life. Moreover following recommendations may be put forward to the higher educational institutions in this regards.

- The authorities of higher educational institutions and parents may pay attention to minimize the adjustment problems of students.

- Appropriate interventions programs may be planned to assist students who have problems in dealing with the factors which can create stress and tension to their life in institutional campus.
- Institutional administration can organize various awareness programs on the available resources and services so that the students can easily take benefit from them.

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