

Factors Affecting Depression, Anxiety, and Stress among Management Undergraduates in Sri Lankan State Universities

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Abstract

Depression, anxiety, and stress among undergraduates have become a growing global concern, significantly affecting academic performance and overall well-being. Although extensive international research exists, few studies have explored this problem within the Sri Lankan context. Accordingly, this study intended to identify the factors that affect depression, anxiety, and stress among management undergraduates, with a special reference to Sri Lankan state universities. The study employed four independent variables: academic pressure, financial difficulties, social media addiction, and drug abuse. The dependent variable was identified as the level of depression, anxiety, and stress reported by undergraduates. Utilising the quantitative methodology, data were collected through a structured 47-item questionnaire administered to a sample of 200 undergraduates from two urban and two rural state universities: Rajarata University of Sri Lanka, Wayamba University of Sri Lanka, University of Colombo, and University of Kelaniya. The measurement scales demonstrated excellent reliability (Cronbach's alpha ranging from 0.88 to 0.94) and strong validity, confirming the robustness of the constructs. Statistical analyses, including descriptive and inferential statistics, were performed using SPSS 25 version. According to the Pearson correlation analysis, there were significant positive relationships between academic pressure, financial difficulties, and social media addiction with depression, anxiety, and stress. Regression analysis revealed that the independent factors collectively accounted for 56.1% of the variance in depression, anxiety, and stress. Academic pressure ($\beta=1.184$, $p<0.01$), financial difficulties ($\beta=0.671$, $p<0.01$), and social media addiction ($\beta=0.673$, $p<0.01$) showed positive relationships with depression, anxiety, and stress, while drug abuse showed a negative relationship. The study recommends strengthening mental health initiatives and incorporating support strategies to promote student well-being.

Keywords: academic pressure, anxiety, depression, drug abuse, financial difficulties