Anxiety, Depression and Stress of class XII students of Sonitpur District, Assam

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ABSTRACT:

Anxiety, depression and stress are common mental disorders. Every student now-a-days can be seen dealing with these disorders due to many reasons. The students who are in their adolescence go through many changes-physical, emotional and mental. As adolescence is also known as a period of storm and stress the adolescents find it very difficult to deal with the problems they face. They go through family pressure, relationship problems, peer pressure, social pressure and the pressure of choosing a good career. During this phase it is very difficult for the students to lead a well-balanced life and they face problems like anxiety, stress and depression. Anxiety, stress and depression also affect their academic performance. Due to these disorders, they cannot concentrate on their daily studies. Anxiety, stress and depression cause difficulties across social, occupational, and everyday functioning and have been linked with physical disease, relationship difficulties, and reduced concentration thus significantly contributing to decrements in sufferers' performance. The financial and other issues enhance students' level of anxiety and depression which can disturb academic performance. Anxiety, depression and stress are grave concerns which can damage health, creativity, and productivity. This paper will help to know the level of anxiety, depression and stress of class XII students also the level of anxiety, stress and depression between males and females. This paper will provide suggestions for the students for dealing with anxiety, depression and stress and lead a well-balanced life.

Keywords: Anxiety, Depression, Stress, Adolescents, Mental Health

INTRODUCTION:

In the present era, the students are engaged in preparing for the competitive exams in order to get enrolled either in elite and reputed institutions or in government jobs. As we know that the youngsters are the future of the nation and they highly contribute to the growth and development of the society and nation, but due to the pressure of establishing themselves in a higher position in the society and family pressure of doing something great, lead them to many mental health problems like anxiety, depression and stress. The Higher Secondary students are the students studying in class 11th and 12th. They are in their mid-adolescence i.e. the period between the age group of 15 to 17 years of age. Adolescence period is a period of storm and

*Corresponding Author Email: jasicanevell0@gmail.com
Published: 27 October 2026
DOI: https://doi.org/10.68504/SPIJSH.2026.v3.i10.45950
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stress as they go through many physical and emotional changes. This is the stage where the students are worried of their career and the particular field to choose. They start preparing for the 12th board exam and competitive exams like NEET/ JEE or other job-oriented exams. They also go through parental pressure, peer pressure, failure, societal pressure, etc. which increases the anxiety level, stress level and depression. The pressure of scoring good marks and getting admission in the elite institutions lead a student towards mental problems and traumas. Depressive disorders often start at a young age and they reduce people functioning and often are recurring.

Anxiety: Anxiety disorders may be caused due to environmental factors, medical factors, genetics, substance abuse, etc. It is most commonly triggered by some specific situation or stress in day-to-day life. Usually, anxiety is response to outside forces, but it is possible that a student may make himself anxious with negative self-task. An anxious person may face panic disorder, social anxiety disorder, specific phobias, generalized anxiety disorder, etc. Anxiety is characterized by a sense of dread, fear, and unease. Having a panic attack might cause you to break out in perspiration, feel anxious, and have your heartbeat faster. A natural response to stress may be the cause of this behaviour. Stress results in anxiety, which is our body's natural response to the stress. Dread or fear of what's to come is the underlying emotion. An anxiety disorder may be present if it is persistent, severe, and significantly impairs your daily activities for more than six months.

Stress: The sensation of being overwhelmed or unable to cope with mental or emotional pressure is referred to as stress. Indeed, stress is a typical reaction that the body experiences when changes occur, resulting in physical, emotional, and cognitive responses. Stress responses assist your body in adapting to new environments. Stress can be beneficial in that it keeps us aware, motivated, and ready to avert danger. If you have an important test coming up, for example, a stress response may help your body perform harder and stay awake longer. However, stress becomes an issue when stressors persist without release or periods of rest.

Depression: Depression (major depressive disorder) is a widespread and significant medical ailment that has a negative impact on how you feel, think, and act. Depression is a prevalent form of mental illness. It is estimated that 5.0 percent of adults in the world suffer from depression. Depression is a key cause of disability worldwide and contributes significantly to the global illness burden. Women are more likely than men to suffer from depression. Suicide is a possibility if you're depressed (WHO, 2021). In teens, physical changes, peer pressure, and different variables can add to depression in young people. They may encounter a portion of the accompanying side effects like withdrawing from loved ones, difficulty focusing on homework, feeling blameworthy, powerless, or useless, restlessness, for example, a failure to sit still, etc.

Thus, Depression can be classified in the following ways based on situation and circumstances faced by the persons: major depression, dysthymia, postpartum depression, Seasonal affective disorder, atypical depression, psychotic depression, bipolar disorder and situational depression.

OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF THE KEY TERM USED:

Anxiety: Anxiety is a feeling of fear, dread, and uneasiness. It might cause you to sweat, feel

restless and tense, and have a rapid heartbeat. It can be a normal reaction to stress. In this study anxiety refers to the responses gathered from the ADSS Scale.

Depression: Depression is more than just sadness. People with depression may experience a lack of interest and pleasure in daily activities, significant weight loss or gain, insomnia or excessive sleeping, lack of energy, inability to concentrate, feelings of worthlessness or excessive guilt and recurrent thoughts of death or suicide. In this study depression refers to the responses gathered from ADSS scale.

Stress: Stress is a challenge or threat to well-being. It is a process in which environmental demands exceed an organism's adaptation capacity, lead to mental and biological changes, and expose people to risks. In this study stress refers to the responses gathered from the ADSS scale.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE:

Baruah.C, et.al (2022) in their study on prevalence and correlates of depression, anxiety and stress among nursing students aimed to find out the prevalence of anxiety, stress and depression among nursing students and associated reasons for it. The study was conducted using web based cross sectional study with 214 nursing students as sample. The findings of the study stated that, prevalence of Depression, anxiety and stress was 55.1%, 63.1% and 29.9%. The study stated that getting less vacation is one of the most associated reasons behind the prevalence of anxiety, stress and depression.

Mishra, A. et al. (2022) in their study on the effect of anxiety and depression on academic performance of college students, stated that high level of anxiety, depression and stress symptoms are present in the students. It is also found that there is no significant impact of anxiety, depression and stress level on gender. But there are so many factors like BMI, self-esteem, insomnia, diet, physical activities, etc.

Ahmad, R. & Ahmad, B. (2023) conducted a study on the impact of depression, stress and anxiety on academic achievement of Higher Secondary student, found that students who had high level of anxiety, depression and stress showed poor academic achievement. The present study has identified a higher level of depression, anxiety and stress and this may be due to the pressure faced by the students to perform well academically and to enter professional courses.

Pachole.N, et.al(2023) in their study on the patterns and factors of depression, anxiety and stress among students preparing for competitive exams aimed to find out the to explore the level of depression, anxiety and stress and to identify various factors associated. A descriptive cross sectional study was conducted on 400students. The findings of the study revealed that 20.3 % of students were found to have moderate depression, 8.8 % have severe depression, 17.8 % have moderate anxiety, 27.3% have severe anxiety, 14.8 % have moderate stress, 12 % have severe stress.

Maharna.N (2023) conducted a study on the role of mindfulness, resilience, and social support on stress, anxiety and depression on the post graduate students to analyse how mindfulness, social support, and resilience are affecting the stress, anxiety and depression. For the study 420 postgraduate students from different universities of Odisha was taken as sample

using stratified random sampling and data was collected using 15-ItemsFive-Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (Baer et. al., 2008), Brief Resilience Scale (Smith et. al., 2008), Multidimensional Scale for Social Support (Zimet et. al., 1988) and Depression anxiety Stress Scale (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995). The research design used for the study was cross sectional research design. The study revealed that the effects of mindfulness, resilience, and social support considerably influence the stress. People with higher levels of mindfulness have better resilience. The study has also found a moderate link between anxiety, social support, and resilience, which means that the people around the students like their friends, family, neighbours and all other people have impact on the student resilience and social support.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

The research questions formulated for the study are as follows:

1. What is the level of anxiety of class XII students?
2. What is the level of Depression of class XII students?
3. What is the level of Stress of class XII students?

OBJECTIVES:

The following objectives have been formulated in this study:

1. To find out the level of anxiety of class XII students.
2. To find out the level of Depression of class XII students.
3. To find out the level of Stress of class XII students.
4. To find out the significant difference in anxiety, depression and stress between boys and girls of class XII.

HYPOTHESIS:

The Hypothesis formulated for the study is:

Ho_1: There is no significant difference in anxiety, depression and stress between boys and girls.

DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY:

The study is delimited to only:

a) Rangapara area of Sonitpur district.
b) College under AHSEC (Assam Higher Secondary Education Council)

METHODOLOGY:

a) Method: In order to conduct the study Descriptive Survey Method has been used.
b) Population: The population of study consists of 200 students of class XII.
c) Sampling: 50% of the population has been selected as sample for the study i.e. 100 students. Out of which 50 are girls and 50 boys.
d) Sampling Method: The students have been selected using Stratified Random Sampling.
e) Tool used: The tool used for the study is Anxiety, Depression and Stress Scale.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION:

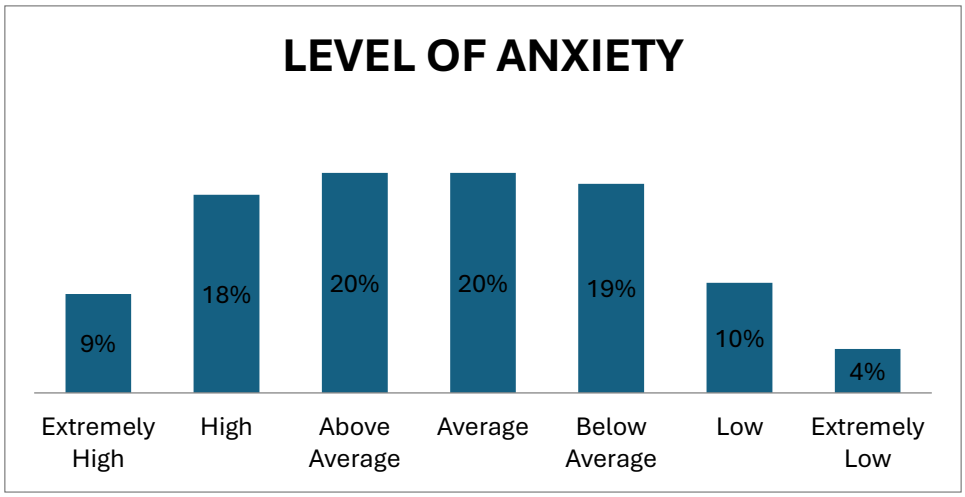
The analysis of data interpretation and discussion of the results are presented below:

In relation to objective no. 1:

Table 01: Table showing the level of anxiety among class XII students:

Level of Anxiety	No. Of Students	%
Extremely High	9	9 %
High	18	18 %
Above average	20	20 %
Average	20	20 %
Below average	19	19 %
Low	10	10 %
Extremely Low	4	4 %

Figure showing the level of anxiety among class XII students:



Interpretation: The above table and figure sheds light into the levels of Anxiety of Class XII students. The table revealed that, 9% students have extremely high anxiety, 18% of the students have high anxiety, 20% students have above average anxiety, 20% students have average anxiety, 19 % have below average anxiety, 10% of the students have low anxiety and 4% students have extremely low anxiety.

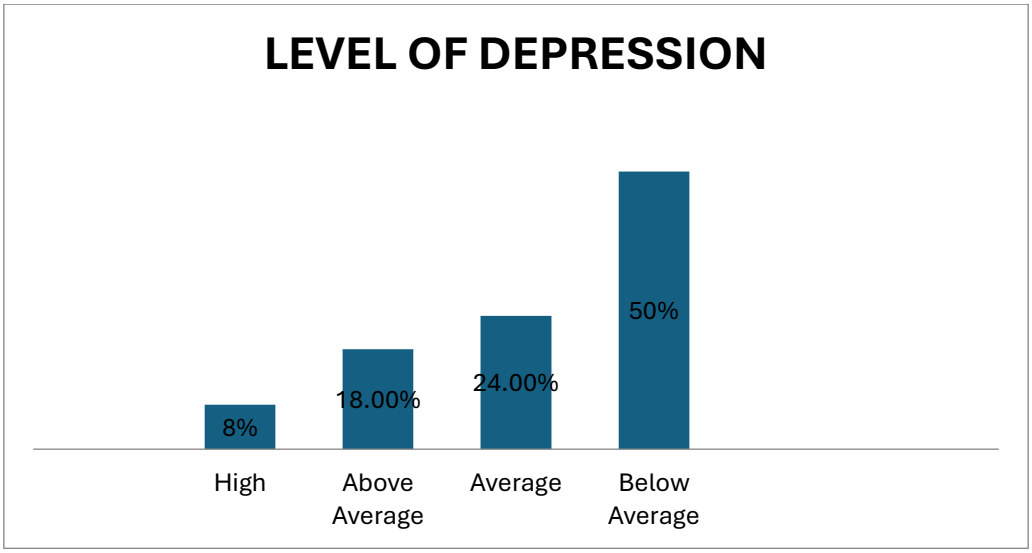
In relation to objective no. 2:

Table no. 2: Table showing the level of depression among class XII students:

Level of Depression	**NO. of Students**	**%**

High	8	8%
Above Average	18	18%
Average	24	24%
Below Average	50	50%

Figure showing the level of depression among class XII students:



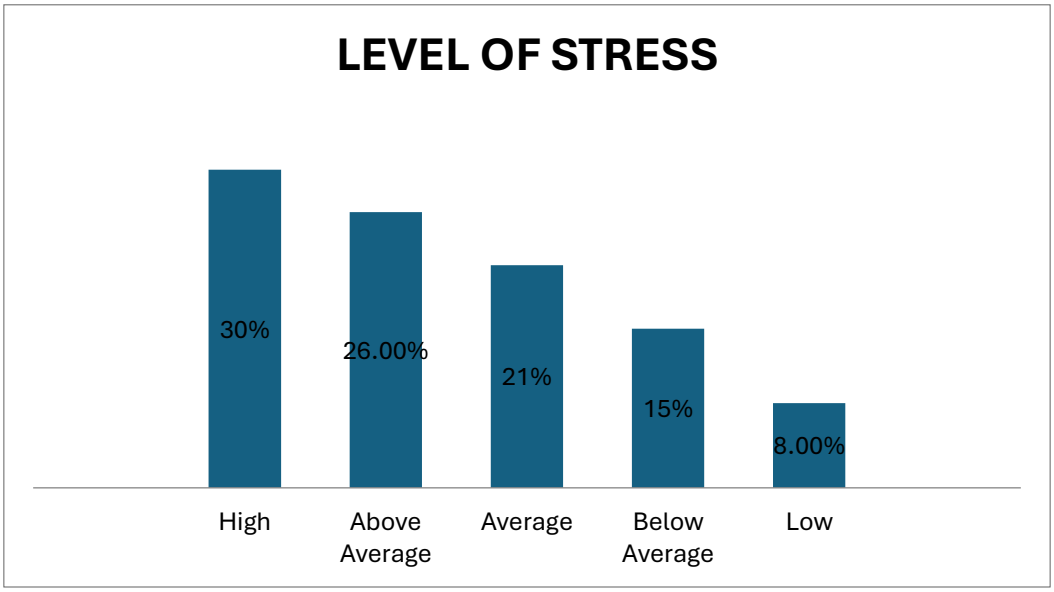
Interpretation: From the above table and graph it can be seen that 8% students have high level of depression, 18% students have above average depression, 24% students have average depression, and 50% of the students have below average level of depression.

In relation to objective no. 3:

Table no. 03: Table showing the level of stress among class XII students:

Level of Stress	**No. Of Students**	**%**
High	30	30 %
Above Average	26	26 %
Average	21	21 %
Below Average	15	15 %
Low	8	8 %

Figure showing the level of stress among class XII students:



Interpretation: The above table and graph sheds light into the levels of stress among the class XII students. 30% students have high level of stress, 26% students have above average stress, 21% students have average stress, 15% of students have below average stress and 8% have low level of stress.

In relation to objective no. 4:

Table no.4: Table showing anxiety, depression and stress differences between boys and girl using t-test

Variables	Boys (n=50)		Girls (n=50)		t-value	Significant
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.		
Anxiety	3.62	1.08	4.08	1.05	-2.14	.035*
Depression	2.84	0.96	3.24	1.01	-2.06	.042*
Stress	3.76	1.10	4.22	1.07	-2.21	.029*

Note: *p<0.05

Interpretation: Table 4 indicates the result of the independent samples t-test conducted to compare the level of anxiety, depression and stress between boys and girls among class XII students. The findings show that the mean score of girls were slightly higher than those of boys for all three variables. Specifically, the mean score of anxiety for girls is 4.08 and for boys the mean score is 3.62, the mean score of depression for girls is 3.24 and 2.84 for boys and the mean score of stress for girls is 4.22 and 3.76 for boys.

The t-test results revealed statistically significant differences between boys and girls in anxiety (t= -2.14, p= .035), depression (t= -2.06, p=.042) and stress (t= -2.21, p=.029), as all the p values were less than the 0.05 level of significance, therefore the null hypothesis stating that

there is no significant difference between boys and girls in terms of anxiety, depression and stress is rejected.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY:

The Findings of the study are as follows:

A considerable proportion of class XII students reported elevated anxiety levels: 9% had extremely high anxiety and 18% high anxiety, while another 20% were above average. Taken together, nearly half (47%) of the students showed anxiety above the average range, indicating that anxiety is a widespread concern among the sampled students.

Depression levels were comparatively lower than anxiety and stress, with 50% of the students reporting below average depression. Only 8% reported high depression and 18% above average depression, suggesting that while depression exists among class XII students, it affects fewer students than anxiety and stress.

Stress emerged as the most pronounced concern among the three variables, with 30% of students reporting high stress and 26% above average stress. More than half of the students (56%) experienced stress above the average range, reflecting the intense academic pressure faced by class XII students preparing for board and competitive examinations.

A statistically significant difference was found between boys and girls in anxiety, depression and stress ($p<0.05$ for all three variables). Girls recorded higher mean scores than boys on anxiety (4.08 vs. 3.62), depression (3.24 vs. 2.84) and stress (4.22 vs. 3.76), and the null hypothesis of no significant gender difference was therefore rejected.

The higher scores among girls suggest that female students of class XII may be more vulnerable to psychological strain than their male counterparts, possibly due to greater academic, familial and social expectations along with the physiological and emotional changes of adolescence.

The overall findings indicate that class XII students, particularly girls, undergo considerable psychological pressure due to the combined demands of board examinations, competitive entrance tests and career-related decisions, which is consistent with earlier studies (Ahmad & Ahmad, 2023; Pachole et al., 2023) that also reported high levels of anxiety and stress among students preparing for competitive examinations.

SUGGESTIONS:

1. Schools and colleges should organize regular counselling sessions and mental health awareness programmes to help class XII students identify and manage anxiety, depression and stress.

2. Yoga, meditation and other mindfulness-based relaxation practices may be incorporated into the daily school routine to help students cope with examination-related anxiety and stress.

3. Teachers should be trained to recognize early signs of anxiety, depression and stress among students and to refer students in need of professional help to trained school counsellors.

4. Parents should be sensitized, through parent-teacher meetings and workshops, to avoid placing excessive academic pressure on their children and to provide emotional support during this critical stage of adolescence.

5. Since girls reported significantly higher levels of anxiety, depression and stress than boys, gender-responsive counselling and support programmes should be planned to address their specific needs.

6. Peer support groups and mentorship programmes can be introduced in schools to give students a safe space to share their difficulties and reduce feelings of isolation.

7. Students should be encouraged to maintain a balanced lifestyle that includes adequate sleep, physical exercise, and recreational or extracurricular activities alongside academic preparation.

8. Early and structured career guidance and counselling should be provided to students so that uncertainty regarding career choices does not add to their stress and anxiety levels.

CONCLUSION:

The present study was undertaken to assess the levels of anxiety, depression and stress among class XII students of Sonitpur district, Assam, and to examine whether these levels differ between boys and girls. The findings revealed that a considerable number of students experience above-average anxiety and stress, largely on account of the pressure of board examinations, competitive entrance tests and career-related uncertainty, whereas depression, though present, affects a comparatively smaller proportion of students. The study further found statistically significant differences between boys and girls on all three variables, with girls reporting higher levels of anxiety, depression and stress than boys, leading to rejection of the null hypothesis.

These findings highlight those higher secondary students, especially girls, need greater psychological support to help them cope with the academic and social pressures of this critical stage of adolescence. Timely counselling, relaxation practices, parental support, and gender-sensitive interventions can go a long way in reducing the burden of anxiety, depression and stress among class XII students, enabling them to lead a well-balanced life and perform better academically. The study, therefore, underscores the need for schools, parents and policy makers to work together in creating a supportive environment that safeguards the mental health and overall well-being of adolescent students.

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