

MENTAL HEALTH OF INDIAN STUDENTS STUDYING ONLINE IN CANADA IN RELATION TO JOB STRESS

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ABSTRACT

Mental health plays a crucial role in the overall development and well-being of children, influencing their emotional resilience, academic performance, social relationships, and long-term outcomes. The paper provides an account of the status of mental health of Indian students studying online in various colleges and universities of Canada. It also provides an insight into the relationship between mental health and job stress among Indian students studying online in Canada. Mental Health Inventory and Job Stress Scale constructed and standardized by the author are used on a sample of 100 Indian students living and studying in Canadian Colleges and Universities. The study revealed low mental health of all the participants that suggested an urgent need to address the issue. In addition to this, the study also revealed that there is a negative correlation between mental health and Job Stress.

Keywords: *Mental Health, Job Stress, Indian Students, Canada*

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INTRODUCTION

Canada has become a premier destination for international education, drawing thousands of Indian students annually with the promise of academic excellence, global exposure, and improved career opportunities. However, beneath this promising landscape lies a growing mental health crisis that disproportionately affects Indian international students. The transition to a new country often entails navigating academic pressure, financial constraints, cultural dislocation, and social isolation—factors that collectively contribute to heightened psychological distress.

Recent reports have highlighted a concerning rise in mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation among Indian students in Canada. In 2023 alone, 36 Indian students reportedly died by suicide, a significant increase from just eight cases in 2018. Many students face the dual burden of excelling academically while managing part-time employment, immigration uncertainties, and the emotional toll of being away from family and familiar support systems. Additionally, cultural stigma surrounding mental health often prevents students from seeking timely professional help, even when resources are available.

Researchers are increasingly emphasizing the importance of mental health awareness as many college students suffer from mental health issues and these challenges affect their lives and their academic performance(Gulliver, Griffiths & Christensen, 2010).

This research paper aims to critically examine the current mental health status of Indian students in Canada and its relationship to Job Stress.

A review of related literature is an important pre-is already known requisite to actual planning and execution of any research work. Best et.al (1992) says “a familiarity with the literature in any problem areas help the students to discover what is already known, what others have attempted to find out what methods have been promising and what problems remain to be solved.”

Gao et al. (2020) in a longitudinal study examined gender differences in depression, anxiety, and stress among 1,892 Chinese college students over four academic years and explored anxiety-

related factors in first-year students. Both genders experienced mild anxiety during the first three years, with females reporting significantly higher anxiety in the first two years, while depression and stress showed no notable gender differences. A greater proportion of females exceeded normal anxiety thresholds, whereas more males experienced varying degrees of depression. Anxiety was positively correlated with introversion, and among female freshmen, it was linked to body image, drinking habits, and academic performance. Findings highlight anxiety as the most prevalent mental health concern, particularly for females, and underscore the need for gender-sensitive mental health policies in higher education.

Padmanabhan (2021) attempted to investigate the role of locus of control on work stress and job satisfaction. To collect data, participants were selected purposively. A total of 65 respondents were selected. The work locus of control scale by Paul E. Spector, job satisfaction survey by Paul E. Spector, and workplace stress survey by The American Institute of Stress were used for the study. The findings indicate that there was no significant difference in work locus of control, job satisfaction, and workplace stress concerning gender. It was found that individuals with an internal locus of control are more likely to have higher job satisfaction. The data were analyzed using mean, S.D, Independent *t*-test, and Pearson's correlation coefficient. Results also showed that work locus of control and workplace stress was found positively correlated; work locus of control and job satisfaction were found negatively correlated; workplace stress and job satisfaction were negatively correlated.

Qiu et al. (2021) examined the association between work stress and mental health and the mediating role of job dissatisfaction. A survey of 6,190 Chinese workers assessed work stress, job dissatisfaction, and mental health using GAD-2 and PHQ-2. Logistic regression tested associations, and path analysis evaluated mediation. Results showed that 27.7% reported work stress, 14.8% job dissatisfaction, 5.0% depressive symptoms, and 3.8% anxiety. Work stress increased odds of anxiety (AOR = 2.78) and depression (AOR = 1.61), with job dissatisfaction partially mediating these relationships. Findings suggested that work stress and job dissatisfaction negatively affect mental health, and interventions targeting stress management and job satisfaction may improve well-being.

Campbell et al. (2022) in systematic review examined observational studies conducted in the UK between 2010 and 2020 to identify factors associated with student mental wellbeing and poor mental health. Extensive searches across five databases yielded 31 eligible studies, predominantly cross-sectional in design. Due to the diversity of measured outcomes and associated factors, findings were synthesized narratively. Key risk factors for poor mental health included childhood trauma, identifying as LGBTQ, and being autistic. Conversely, protective factors promoting wellbeing encompassed strong social support networks and adaptability to the transition into higher education. Behaviors linked to poor mental health included low engagement in academic and leisure activities and limited mental health literacy.

Varughese et al.(2022) in their research paper explained that over the past five years, Canada has witnessed a significant surge in the number of international students from India, who now represent approximately 35% of the country's international student population and 62% of all students enrolled in Ontario colleges. This article begins by contextualizing the rapid growth of Indian international student enrolment in Canada. Drawing on data from a national online survey and qualitative interviews, the study investigates the primary challenges faced by these students during the COVID-19 pandemic. Key findings reveal that Indian international students experienced compounded psychosocial, academic, and financial disruptions. The study posits that the severity of these challenges is closely linked to the increasing commercialization of Canada's "study-work-immigrate" pathway, which has shaped the expectations and experiences of Indian students pursuing education abroad.

Fida et al. (2023) examined gender differences in exposure to workplace stressors through two complementary approaches. Study 1 comprised a systematic review of research on gender and key stressors (e.g., high demands, poor support, lack of clarity and control). From an initial pool of 13,376,130 records, eligible studies revealed mixed evidence, with many reporting no significant gender differences and inconsistent findings regarding greater exposure for either men or women. Study 2 analyzed cross-sectional data from 11,289 employees nested within 71 public organizations (50.6% men). Latent profile analysis identified three psychosocial risk profiles- low, medium, and high stressors- similar in structure for both genders. Men were more likely to belong to the low-stressor profile, whereas women were more likely to fall into the

medium-stressor profile. Both genders had equal likelihood of being in the high-stressor profile. They found gender differences in exposure to workplace stressors are inconsistent. Despite theoretical expectations based on gender role theory and the gendering of work, empirical evidence provides limited support for systematic differences.

Thus, the above review depicts a clear picture of the status of the mental health students and clearly calls for an urgent need of a solid policy to improve the mental health of the students.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study the status of mental health of Indian students studying online in Colleges and Universities of Canada.
- To study the relationship between mental health and job stress of Indian students studying online in Colleges and Universities of Canada.
- To study the difference between the mental health of male and female Indian students studying online in Colleges and Universities of Canada.
- To study the difference between the job stress of male and female Indian students studying online in Colleges and Universities of Canada.

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

H01 There exists no significant relationship between mental health and job stress of Indian students studying online in Colleges and Universities of Canada.

H02 There exists no significant difference between the mental health of male and female Indian students studying online in Colleges and Universities of Canada.

H03 There exists no significant difference between the Job Stress of male and female Indian students studying online in Colleges and Universities of Canada.

SAMPLE OF THE STUDY

For this research, a sample of 100 Indian students studying in Colleges and Universities of Canada was collected. These students were enrolled in different graduate and under graduate courses and were attending their classes online.

TOOL USED

1. Mental Health Inventory constructed and standardized by the authors.

2. Job Stress Scale constructed and standardized by the authors.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Descriptive Analysis

A detailed descriptive analysis is provided in Table 1 and 2. To understand the distribution and characteristics of the data, statistical measures such as mean, standard deviation, range, skewness, and kurtosis were calculated. These results offer insights into the nature of the data collected for variables under study.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics of Mental Health

N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis	Minimum	Maximum
100	157.27	4.251	-0.028	-1.251	150	164

Mental Health plays a vital role in shaping an individual's personal development, self-awareness, interpersonal relationships, and success in both academic and professional settings. Table 1 presents the mean and standard deviation of mental health scores, which were 157.27 and 4.25 respectively. The standard deviation, a measure of dispersion, indicates how spread out the scores are around the mean.

The skewness value of -0.028 suggests that means the distribution of data is almost perfectly symmetrical, with a very slight negative skew (left tail is a bit longer than the right tail), but it remains within acceptable limits. Similarly, the kurtosis value of -1.251 meaning a flatter peak and lighter tails than a normal distribution, meaning the shape of the curve closely resembles that of a normal distribution. This classifies the distribution as platykurtic, which falls within the range of normality.

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics of Job Stress

N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis	Minimum	Maximum
100	218.32	24.245	0.065	-1.198	180	260

Jobs are essential for financial security, social identity, and personal fulfillment, while low job stress promotes productivity, job satisfaction, and overall well-being. Reducing workplace stress helps prevent burnout and mental health issues, creating healthier and more sustainable work environments. Table 2 presents the mean and standard deviation of job stress scores, which were 218.32 and 24.245 respectively. The standard deviation, a measure of dispersion, indicates how spread out the scores are around the mean. The skewness value of 0.065 suggests that

distribution is almost perfectly symmetrical, with a very slight positive skew, it remains within acceptable limits. Similarly, the kurtosis value of -1.198 meaning a flatter peak and lighter tails than a normal distribution, meaning the shape of the curve closely resembles that of a normal distribution. This classifies the distribution as platykurtic, which falls within the range of normality.

INFERENTIAL ANALYSIS

The objective of the correlation analysis is to find out the relation between the variables under study i.e. mental health and job stress. For this, product moment correlation was worked out to obtain the nature and extent of relationship between mental health and job stress.

Table 3
Coefficient of correlation between Mental Health and Job Stress of Indian Students
studying online in Canada

Variables	N	r-value
Mental Health	100	-0.98
Job Stress	100	

Table 3 shows that coefficient of correlation between mental health and job stress of Indian students studying online in Canada is -0.98. Thus relationship between these two variables is negatively correlated. Therefore, the hypothesis H 01 “There exists no significant relationship between mental health and job stress of Indian students studying online in Colleges and Universities of Canada” is rejected.

Table 4

**Mean, Standard deviation and t-value of mental health among male and female students
(N=100)**

Sample	N	Mean	S.D.	t-value	Level of Significance
Male	50	157.86	4.189	1.157	Not Significant
Female	50	156.68	4.273		

Table 4 shows the calculated t -value of 1.157 (df=98) for mental health of male and female Indian students studying online in Canada is less than the critical t-value of 1.984. This means the result is not statistically significant. Therefore, the hypothesis H 02 “There exists no significant difference between the mental health of male and female Indian students studying online in Colleges and Universities of Canada” is not rejected.

Table 5

**Mean, Standard deviation and t-value of job stress among male and female students
(N=100)**

Sample	N	Mean	S.D.	t-value	Level of Significance
Male	50	215.14	24.602	1.136	Not Significant
Female	50	221.5	23.701		

Table 5 shows the calculated t -value of 1.136 (df=98) for job stress of male and female Indian students studying online in Canada is less than the critical t-value of 1.984. This means the result is not statistically significant. Therefore, the hypothesisH 03 “There exists no significant difference between the job stress of male and female Indian students studying online in Colleges and Universities of Canada” is not rejected.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The mental health landscape for Indian international students in Canada is shaped by a complex interplay of academic, financial, cultural, and social factors. As the number of Indian students continues to rise, particularly in provinces like Ontario, the challenges they face have become increasingly pronounced. This research highlights how acculturative stress, intergenerational expectations, discrimination, and the pressures of navigating Canada’s “study-work-immigrate” pathway contribute to heightened psychological distress.

The findings of this research show that students studying online in Canada have a low level of mental health. The finding of this study that there exists a negative correlation between mental

health and job stress of Indian students studying online in Canada, is supported by Qiu et al., (2021). They examined the association between work stress and mental health and the mediating role of job dissatisfaction and suggested that work stress and job dissatisfaction negatively affect mental health, and interventions targeting stress management and job satisfaction may improve well-being.

The result that there is no significant male and female differences in mental well-being and job stress among Indian students studying abroad is supported by the study conducted by Fida et al. (2023) and by Padmanabhan (2021). A longitudinal study from China by Gao et al.(2020) also shows that there does not exist a significant difference between the scores of male and female students for mental health. There were no significant gender differences in students' depression and stress levels.

This study calls for targeted interventions, policy reforms, and inclusive practices that recognize the diversity within the Indian student population and respond effectively to their evolving mental health needs and job related issues.

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