

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Stress Behind the Hostel Walls: Students' Perception of Stress Management

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HOW TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:

Arpita S. Kandpal, Seijal Gahlan. Stress Behind the Hostel Walls: Students' Perception of Stress Management. Ind. J Biol 2026; 13(1): 07-11.

ABSTRACT

Effective stress management is crucial for students' mental health, academic success, and overall well-being, particularly for those residing in university hostels. Hostel life, while offering opportunities for social interaction and independence, also exposes students to various stressors such as academic pressure, adjustment issues, homesickness, and time management challenges. To examine students' perceptions of stress management, a structured survey was conducted using a Google Form among 40 students belonging to different academic programmes at GBPUA&T, Pantnagar. The questionnaire was designed to assess key aspects including major sources of stress, coping strategies adopted by students, academic workload, availability of social support, and overall mental well-being. The collected data were analysed using descriptive statistical methods to identify prevailing trends and patterns. The findings of the study indicate that although a majority of students attempt to manage stress through self-care practices, peer support, and participation in extracurricular activities, a considerable number of students continue to experience high levels of stress. Academic pressure, homesickness, and difficulties in managing time emerged as major stress-inducing factors. The study underscores the need for strengthening institutional support systems, including the provision of accessible counselling services, regular stress management workshops, and mental health awareness programmes. Such initiatives can play a significant role in enhancing students' coping abilities and improving the overall quality of student life in the hostels of Pantnagar University.

KEYWORDS

• Stress • Management • Students • Perception

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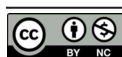
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Received: 29-12-2025

Accepted: 31-01-2026



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INTRODUCTION

G.B. Pant University of Agriculture and Technology (GBPUA&T), established in 1960, is India's first agricultural university founded on the American land-grant model. Located in Pantnagar, in the Udham Singh Nagar district of Uttarakhand, the university plays a pivotal role in agricultural education, research, and extension. It comprises several colleges and departments offering teaching and research in diverse disciplines such as agriculture, veterinary and animal sciences, technology, home science, fisheries, and basic sciences. The main campus houses approximately 23 hostels, accommodating nearly 4,200 to 4,400 students, making hostel life an integral part of the university's academic ecosystem.

Stress management is particularly important for hostel students, as hostel life presents a range of unique challenges. These include academic workload and performance pressure, adjustment to a new social and physical environment, interpersonal conflicts with roommates, and emotional stress arising from being away from family. If not managed effectively, such stressors can negatively affect students' academic performance, mental health, and overall well-being.

Effective stress management helps students enhance concentration, reduce anxiety, and improve academic efficiency. It also contributes to better physical health by minimizing stress-related problems such as headaches, fatigue, sleep disturbances, and weakened immunity. From a psychological perspective, proper stress management supports emotional stability, motivation, and resilience, thereby reducing the risk of anxiety, depression, and burnout.

Moreover, the ability to manage stress positively influences students' social relationships. Lower stress levels reduce irritability and conflicts, improve communication, and foster healthier peer interactions within the hostel environment. Common and effective stress management strategies include time management, regular physical activity, balanced nutrition, relaxation techniques such as meditation and deep breathing, and seeking emotional support from friends, seniors, and professional counsellors. Overall, effective stress management plays a crucial role in creating a supportive hostel environment that

promotes personal growth, resilience, and a better quality of life. Encouraging healthy coping mechanisms among hostel students can significantly contribute to their academic success and holistic development during their stay at GBPUA&T.

METHODOLOGY

To understand how students at Pantnagar University manage stress in hostel life, a simple questionnaire was created and shared through Google Forms. The questions included both yes/no and multiple-choice types, focusing on common stress causes, ways students cope, support systems, and overall mental well-being. The survey was sent to students from different degree programs to get diverse views, and 40 valid responses were collected. The data were organized in Google Sheets and analysed using basic statistics such as percentages and charts to understand students' thoughts and experiences with stress management better.

Effective stress management methods for students include getting enough sleep, regular exercise, practicing relaxation techniques like deep breathing and meditation, staying organized, managing time well, having social support, engaging in hobbies, and seeking professional help when needed. These approaches help reduce anxiety, improve concentration, and support overall health and academic success in hostel environments.

General Information:

Table 1: General information of students

Parameters	Respondent no.	Respondent Percentage
Age		
18-21	12	30
22-25	28	70
Gender		
Male	11	40
Female	17	60
Degree of Study		
UG	16	40
PG	24	60

The demographic profile of the respondents shows a varied representation across age, gender, and level of study. With regard to age, the majority of respondents (70%) belonged to the 22–25 years age group, while 30% were in

the 18–21 years category, indicating that most participants were relatively mature students. In terms of gender distribution, female respondents constituted a higher proportion (60%), whereas male respondents accounted for 40% of the sample.

Regarding the level of education, a greater number of respondents were pursuing postgraduate programmes (60%), while undergraduate students represented 40% of the total respondents. Overall, the demographic data suggest that the study sample was predominantly composed of postgraduate and female students within the 22–25 years age group.

Table 2: Stress Management

Parameters	Response No.	Percentage
Homesickness		
Always	06	15
Often	06	15
Sometimes	21	52.5
Rarely	06	15
Never	01	02.5
Lonely or isolated in hostel		
Always	05	12.5
Often	05	12.5
Sometimes	17	42.5
Rarely	09	22.5
Never	04	10
Adjustment in hostel		
Yes, very much	11	27.5
Somewhat	18	45
No	11	27.5
Academic stress		
Positively	17	42.5
Negatively	08	20
No Effect	15	37.5
Exams and assignments stress		
Always	10	25
Often	07	17.5
Sometimes	13	42.5
Rarely	03	7.5
Never	03	7.5
Infrastructure for studies		
Yes	19	48.7
No	17	43.6
Others	03	7.8

Parameters	Response No.	Percentage
Hostel environment for studies		
Strongly agree	05	12.5
Agree	04	10
Neutral	20	50
Disagree	07	17.5
Strongly disagree	04	10
Conflicts with roommates		
Always	03	7.5
Often	04	10
Sometimes	09	22.5
Rarely	14	35
Never	10	25
Room sharing		
Yes	18	45
No	14	35
Sometimes	08	20
Fear of seniors / peers		
Yes	17	17.9
Sometimes	10	25.6
No	19	48.7
Prefer not to say	03	7.7
Support provided during stress by friends		
Very supportive	16	40
Somewhat supportive	19	47.5
Not supportive	05	12.5
Hostel food		
Yes	12	30
No	10	25
Sometimes	18	45
Comfortable with hostel rules		
Strongly Agree	04	10
Agree	08	20
Neutral	15	37.5
Disagree	05	12.5
Strongly disagree	08	20
Sleeping and health issues		
Always	06	15
Often	10	25
Sometimes	13	32.5
Rarely	07	17.5
Never	04	10

table cont....

Parameters	Response No.	Percentage
Activities in reducing stress		
Listening to music	21	52.5
Sports / Exercise	13	32.5
Reading / studying	07	17.5
Online friends	06	15
Offline friends	12	30
Others	04	10
Professors / mentors support		
Yes	10	25
No	17	42.5
Sometimes	13	32.5
Counselling sessions helpful or not		
Yes	13	32.5
No	11	27.5
Maybe	16	40
Counselling sessions needed or not		
Yes	16	41
No	23	59

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

- Homesickness:** About 52.5% of students sometimes feel homesick in the hostel, while 15% experience it often or always. Over half of the students sometimes feel homesick due to the unfamiliar hostel environment, separation from family, and missing home comforts. The transition to a new social and academic setting creates emotional distress that many students gradually work through.
- Lonely or isolated in hostel:** Feelings of loneliness or isolation are reported sometimes by 42.5%, with 25% feeling it often or always. Feelings of loneliness or isolation stem from adjusting to a new peer group and living away from established social support, common during initial relocation phases.
- Adjustment in hostel:** Nearly 72.5% of students find it somewhat or very difficult to adjust to hostel life compared to home. Difficulty adjusting to hostel life reflects not only environmental changes but also cultural and routine disruptions that challenge emotional stability and mental well-being.
- Academic stress:** Academic performance is positively affected for 42.5% of students, but 20% say hostel life affects it negatively. Positive academic impact reported by 42.5% likely comes from structured study routines and peer motivation, while negative effects for 20% may be due to stress and lack of proper study resources.
- Exams and assignments stress:** Exam and assignment stress is experienced sometimes or more frequently by 67.5% of students. Frequent exam stress (67.5%) arises from heavy academic workload combined with adjustment pressures, sleep disturbances, and limited coping skills.
- Infrastructure for studies:** About 48.7% feel they have proper study infrastructure in the hostel, but 43.6% do not. Mixed perceptions of study infrastructure show uneven availability or quality of facilities, affecting concentration and academic confidence.
- Hostel environment for studies:** Half of the students are neutral about the hostel environment's support for studies, while 27.5% disagree or strongly disagree. Neutral or unsupportive views on the hostel environment indicate noise, distractions, or lack of conducive study spaces.
- Conflicts with roommates:** Conflicts with roommates occur sometimes or more frequently for 40%, while 60% rarely or never face conflicts. Roommate conflicts appear due to personal differences, sharing challenges, or overcrowding, impacting psychological comfort.
- Room sharing:** 45% are comfortable sharing rooms, but 35% are not. Sharing discomfort reflects privacy concerns, incompatible habits, or space limitations.
- Fear of seniors/peers:** Fear of seniors or peers is reported by roughly 44%, with 25% feeling this sometimes, pointing to social tensions in the hostel.
- Support provided during stress:** Friends provide good support during stress, with 87.5% being very or somewhat supported by their hostel friends. Most students find their hostel friends very or somewhat supportive during stress.

12. **Hostel food:** Almost 25% of the students doesn't find the food satisfactory. Whereas, 45% of respondents find the food satisfactory sometimes.
13. **Comfortable with hostel rules:** 37.5% of the students find the hostel rules neutral, while 10% agree with the rules and 12.5% totally disagree with rules. The students disagree with the rules because of the timings of the hostel.
14. **Sleeping and health issues:** 15% of students feel sleeping issues, while 10% never feels this way and 32.5% students feel sleeping issues sometimes, this is because of homesickness, peer pressure, unsatisfactory food and academic stress.
15. **Activities in reducing stress:** 52.5% reduce stress by listening to music; sports/ exercise and socializing are also common stress relievers. Stress relief through music, exercise, and social activities aligns with common coping strategies that help regulate mood and reduce anxiety.
16. **Professors/ mentors support:** Only 25% feel supported by professors, mentors, or wardens when stressed. Limited mentor or warden support suggests gaps in institutional mental health services and awareness.
17. **Counselling sessions helpful or not:** There are mixed views about counselling and stress management workshops; 40% believe they would help, but 59% do not want such sessions.
18. **Counselling sessions needed or not:** More than 59% do not wish to attend stress management counselling, showing reluctance possibly due to stigma or unawareness. But 41% wishes to attend it.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, managing stress during hostel life at Pantnagar University is essential for students' overall well-being and academic success. The survey shows that students face various stressors like homesickness, academic pressure, adjustment challenges, and social conflicts. Many students rely on peer support, music, exercise, and positive thinking to cope, but there is a clear need for more structured support such as counselling, relaxation sessions like yoga and meditation, and improved study and living environments. Flexibility in hostel rules, better food quality, and recreational activities can also reduce stress. Adopting effective stress management practices, maintaining healthy lifestyles, and fostering strong support networks will help students manage stress better and enjoy a more balanced, fulfilling hostel experience. Continuous efforts by the university to create a supportive and understanding environment will benefit students' mental health, academic performance, and personal growth throughout their university life and beyond.

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