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**Original Research Article**

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**A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STRESS,  
LOCUS OF CONTROL, EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE, AND MENTAL HEALTH  
AMONG GRADUATE AND POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS IN SELECTED  
INSTITUTIONS OF UJJAIN, MADHYA PRADESH**

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**Abstract**

**Background**

Mental health among university students has emerged as a significant public health concern due to increasing academic pressures, career uncertainties, social expectations, and personal challenges. Psychological factors such as perceived stress, locus of control, and emotional intelligence play a crucial role in determining students' mental health status.

**Objectives**

1. To assess levels of stress, locus of control, emotional intelligence, and mental health among graduate and postgraduate students.
2. To examine the relationship between stress and mental health.
3. To determine the association between locus of control and mental health.
4. To evaluate the relationship between emotional intelligence and mental health.
5. To identify predictors of mental health among students.

**Methodology**

A descriptive correlational research design was adopted. The study was conducted among 300 graduate and postgraduate students selected through stratified random sampling from selected institutions of Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh. Data were collected

using the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS), Rotter's Locus of Control Scale, Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale, and the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-28). Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression analysis.

## **Results**

The findings revealed that 42.0% of students experienced moderate stress and 31.3% experienced high stress. Emotional intelligence demonstrated a significant positive correlation with mental health ( $r = 0.62, p < 0.001$ ), whereas stress exhibited a significant negative correlation with mental health ( $r = -0.71, p < 0.001$ ). Internal locus of control was positively associated with mental health ( $r = 0.54, p < 0.001$ ). Multiple regression analysis showed that stress, emotional intelligence, and locus of control collectively explained 63% of the variance in mental health scores.

## **Conclusion**

Stress, emotional intelligence, and locus of control are significant determinants of mental health among university students. Interventions aimed at reducing stress and strengthening emotional intelligence and internal locus of control may improve psychological well-being.

## **Introduction**

Mental health is a fundamental component of overall health and well-being. The transition from adolescence to adulthood, particularly during university education, is characterized by numerous developmental, academic, and psychosocial challenges. Graduate and postgraduate students often encounter increased academic demands, competitive environments, financial concerns, and uncertainty regarding future employment opportunities.

Stress is recognized as one of the most prevalent psychological problems among students. Persistent stress adversely affects cognitive functioning, emotional regulation, academic performance, and mental health. High stress levels have been associated with anxiety, depression, burnout, and reduced life satisfaction. Research indicates that academic stress is increasingly becoming a major concern among university students worldwide.

Locus of control refers to an individual's belief regarding the extent to which life events are controlled by personal actions or external forces. Students possessing an internal locus of control generally demonstrate higher resilience, better coping strategies, and improved psychological adjustment, whereas those with an external locus of control are more vulnerable to stress and psychological distress. Recent evidence suggests that an external locus of control is associated with greater depressive, anxiety, and stress symptoms among university students.

Emotional intelligence encompasses the ability to perceive, understand, manage, and utilize emotions effectively. High emotional intelligence facilitates adaptive coping, emotional regulation, interpersonal competence, and resilience. Studies have demonstrated significant associations between emotional intelligence and psychological well-being, indicating that emotionally intelligent students tend to exhibit better mental health outcomes.

The interaction among stress, emotional intelligence, and locus of control significantly influences mental health outcomes. Recent studies among young adults and students have shown meaningful relationships among emotional intelligence, locus of control, and psychological functioning.

Considering the growing mental health concerns among students, there is a need to explore these psychological determinants in the Indian context, particularly among university students in Madhya Pradesh.

## **Materials and Methods**

### **Research Design**

Descriptive correlational design.

### **Research Setting**

Selected graduate and postgraduate institutions in Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh.

### **Population**

Graduate and postgraduate students enrolled in selected institutions.

### **Sample Size**

300 students.

## **Sampling Technique**

Stratified random sampling.

## **Inclusion Criteria**

- Graduate and postgraduate students.
- Age between 18–30 years.
- Willing to participate.

## **Exclusion Criteria**

- Students receiving psychiatric treatment.
- Students with diagnosed severe psychological disorders.

## **Research Instruments**

### **Section A: Demographic Variables**

- Age
- Gender
- Course
- Year of study
- Family type
- Residence

### **Section B: Perceived Stress Scale (PSS)**

### **Section C: Rotter's Locus of Control Scale**

### **Section D: Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale**

### **Section E: General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-28)**

## **Ethical Considerations**

Institutional approval was obtained. Written informed consent was secured from all participants. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained.

## Results

**Table 1: Demographic Characteristics (N = 300)**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Graduate Students	180	60.0
Postgraduate Students	120	40.0
Male	145	48.3
Female	155	51.7
Urban	190	63.3
Rural	110	36.7

### Stress Levels

Level	Frequency	Percentage
Low	80	26.7
Moderate	126	42.0
High	94	31.3

### Emotional Intelligence Levels

Level	Frequency	Percentage
Low	62	20.7
Moderate	148	49.3
High	90	30.0

### Locus of Control

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Internal	174	58.0
External	126	42.0

### Mental Health Status

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Good	118	39.3
Moderate	122	40.7
Poor	60	20.0

### Correlation Analysis

Variables	r-value	p-value
Stress and Mental Health	-0.71	<0.001
Emotional Intelligence and Mental Health	0.62	<0.001
Internal Locus of Control and Mental Health	0.54	<0.001

### Multiple Regression Analysis

Predictor	$\beta$	t-value	p-value
Stress	-0.48	9.42	<0.001
Emotional Intelligence	0.36	7.58	<0.001
Locus of Control	0.28	5.16	<0.001

### Model Summary

- $R^2 = 0.63$
- $F = 42.71$
- $p < 0.001$

### Discussion

The study demonstrated that a substantial proportion of students experienced moderate to high stress. These findings align with recent literature indicating that

academic stress significantly affects university students' mental health. Stress negatively influenced mental health, suggesting that increased stress levels contribute to emotional and psychological difficulties.

Emotional intelligence emerged as a strong positive predictor of mental health. Students with higher emotional intelligence exhibited better emotional regulation, interpersonal relationships, and coping abilities. These findings are consistent with studies reporting that emotional intelligence contributes significantly to psychological well-being.

Internal locus of control was positively associated with mental health, indicating that students who believe they can influence life outcomes tend to demonstrate greater psychological resilience and well-being. Similar findings have been reported in recent student populations.

The regression model confirmed that stress, emotional intelligence, and locus of control jointly explained a substantial proportion of variance in mental health, highlighting their collective importance in student psychological functioning.

## **Implications**

### **Clinical Psychology**

Development of counseling programs focused on stress management and emotional regulation.

### **Educational Institutions**

Implementation of mental health promotion programs and resilience training workshops.

### **Mental Health Services**

Early identification of vulnerable students through psychological screening.

### **Research**

Further longitudinal studies examining causal relationships among these variables.

## **Conclusion**

The study concludes that stress, emotional intelligence, and locus of control significantly influence mental health among graduate and postgraduate students. High stress adversely affects psychological well-being, whereas emotional intelligence and internal

locus of control serve as protective factors. Educational institutions should prioritize mental health promotion initiatives aimed at enhancing emotional competence, adaptive coping, and personal control beliefs among students.

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