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Comparative Study Of Physical Education Students' Perceived Stress

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This study aimed to assess perceived stress levels among 120 physical education students, equally divided between males and females. The Perceived Stress Scale-2 (PSS-2), developed by Sheldon Cohen and adapted into Hindi by Singh et al. (2025), was used to measure stress perception. Descriptive statistics and an independent t-test were conducted to compare stress between genders. Results showed that both groups experienced moderate stress, but females reported significantly higher levels (mean = 20.27, SD = 7.91) than males (mean = 16.32, SD = 6.32), with a mean difference of 3.95 and a p-value of 0.003. The larger standard deviation in the female group also indicated greater variability in their stress responses. These findings suggest a clear gender difference in stress levels and highlight the need for targeted stress management strategies that consider the unique challenges faced by male and female physical education students.

INTRODUCTION

Stress, a psychological and physiological response to external or internal demands, has become a significant focus of research in modern psychology due to its profound implications for mental and physical health (Selye, 1976; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Particularly in academic settings, students experience stress from various sources, including workload, expectations, peer competition, and future uncertainties. Perceived stress, defined as the subjective evaluation of stress in one's life, varies widely based on individual coping capacities, personality traits, and sociocultural influences (Cohen et al., 1983).

Among students enrolled in physical education programs, stress presents a unique challenge. In addition to academic pressures, these students face rigorous physical training, performance assessments, and practical skill demonstrations, all of which contribute to heightened stress levels (Zhonghui et al., 2024). Moreover, gender plays a vital role in how stress is experienced and managed. Research suggests that female students often report greater level of perceived stress compared to males, potentially due to sociocultural expectations, biological factors, and emotional coping styles (Tamres et al., 2002; Matud, 2004).

Understanding gender differences in stress perception is critical in the context of physical education, where students are expected to maintain both academic and athletic excellence. This study aims to explore these differences by employing the PSS-2 tool among male and female physical education students. The findings will provide insight into the psychological landscape

of PE students and serve as a basis for future interventions aimed at enhancing their mental well-being and academic performance.

METHODOLOGY

SELECTION OF SUBJECTS

By applying random sampling 60 male physical education students and 60 female physical education students were selected and were taken as the subjects of the study. The age of the subjects ranged from 18-25 years.

SELECTION OF VARIABLES

Based on a comprehensive review of pertinent literature from books, journals, sports magazines, the internet, and discussions with subject matter experts, the researcher chose the Perceived Stress Scale-2 (PSS-2), created by Sheldon Cohen (1994) and modified in Hindi by Singh et al. (2025), to gauge the stress levels of physical education students.

CRITERION MEASURES

Sheldon Cohen created the Perceived Stress Scale-2 (PSS-2) in 1994 to gauge how stressed people feel. It is the psychological tool most frequently employed to gauge stress perception.

STATISTICAL TECHNIQUES USED

In order to evaluate how stressed out physical education students felt, descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) were calculated for the study. The Independent "t" test was used to evaluate how male and female physical education students perceived stress. The 0.05 threshold was chosen as the additional level of significance.

RESULTS

The mean perceived stress score for male students was **16.32 (SD = 6.32)**.

The mean perceived stress score for female students was **20.27 (SD = 7.91)**.

Table 1: Independent 't' test between male and female physical education students.

Dependent Variable	Independent Variables	N	Mean	S.D.	Std. Error Mean	Mean Difference	t	SIG. (2-TAILED)
PERCIEVED STRESS	Male	60	16.32	6.32	0.82	-3.95	-3.02	.003
	Female	60	20.27	7.91	1.02			

The results of the t-test showed a statistically significant difference in stress levels by gender ($t = -3.02$, $p = 0.003$).

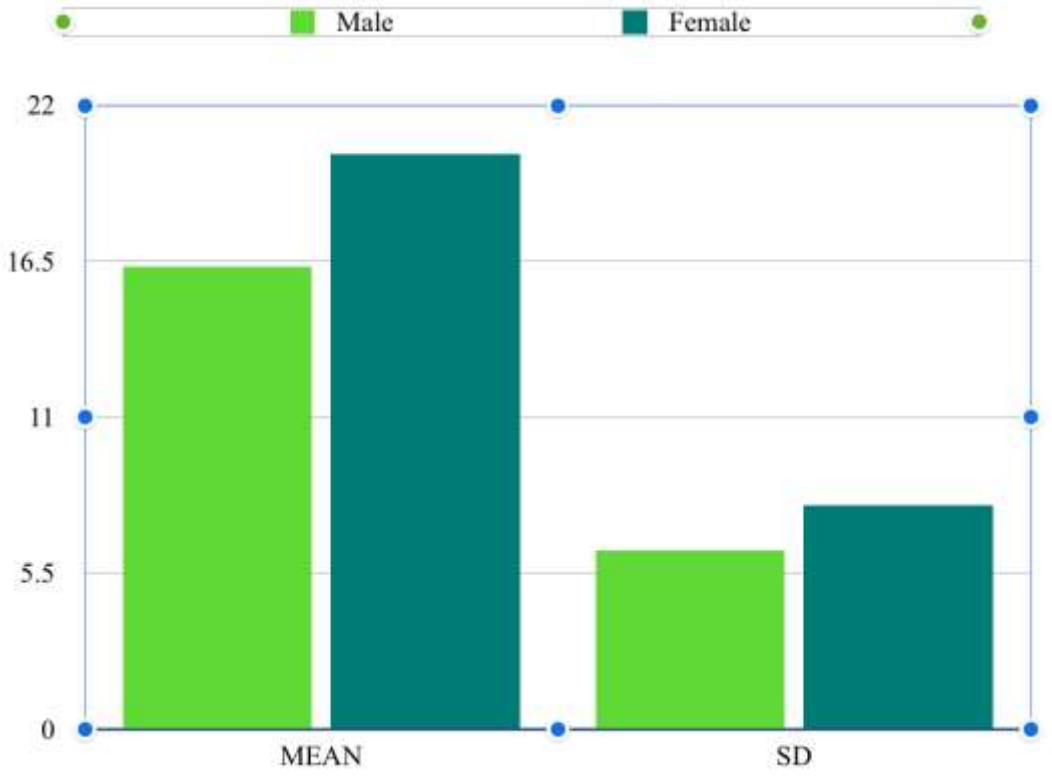

Figure 1: Comparison of Stress level between male and female physical education students.

DISCUSSION

According to the results, there is a notable gender difference in the amount of stress that physical education students perceive, with female students reporting much higher levels of stress than male students. This is consistent with earlier research showing how psychologically susceptible female students are to stressors. Women typically experience daily stressors more frequently and adopt emotion-focused coping mechanisms, which might exacerbate the feeling of stress (Matud, 2004). According to Tamres et al. (2002), women are more likely to report higher levels of stress and use a wider variety of coping strategies, which increases the variability of stress experiences.

The greater standard deviation in stress scores among female participants (SD = 7.91) compared to males (SD = 6.32) further supports the notion of greater variability in stress responses among women. The American Psychological Association (2020) reports that females consistently score higher on stress-related surveys due to the dual burden of academic

expectations and social responsibilities. Kessler et al. (1993) also documented that women are more susceptible to stress-induced conditions such as anxiety and depression. These observations support the conclusion that stress interventions should be designed with a gender-sensitive approach, considering the unique psychological pressures faced by female students in physically demanding academic environments.

Moreover, cultural and institutional expectations often require female students to meet dual standards—excelling both in academic theory and physical prowess—factors which may exacerbate their stress levels. As shown by Zhonghui et al. (2024), participation in physical activity can alleviate stress, but without adequate psychological support, the pressures of competitive performance may negate those benefits. These findings highlight the urgent need to integrate stress management strategies, such as mindfulness programs or peer support groups, specifically tailored to the needs of female physical education students.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that both male and female physical education students exhibit moderate levels of perceived stress. However, female students report significantly higher stress than males. This emphasizes the importance of implementing gender-responsive strategies in academic institutions to foster healthier learning environments and improve overall student well-being.

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