

Post-COVID Mental Health in Students – A Silent Crisis

An Exploratory Data Analysis of 16,000+ Students



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Before & After COVID: Why Student Mental Health Deserves Attention

● Pre-COVID (India)

2.6% youth had clinical depression.

45.8% of school students had psychological issues, 6% reported suicidal thoughts.

● During/Post-COVID

University studies in India showed up to 30-50% of students faced moderate-to-severe depression/anxiety during the lockdown

Daily mental health helpline calls in Bengaluru increased 28x in 3 years, especially among students

NCRB reported 13,089 student suicides in 2021, compared to 12,526 in 2020 - a rising trend

● Sleep & Depression Rising

In Delhi, 20% of teens are chronically sleep-deprived, and 60% of them show depression symptoms.

A meta-study showed depression among Indian youths rose from 7.1% (pre-lockdown) to 30.8% during lockdown

Who I've Studied: 16,000+ Students Across Degrees, Lifestyle & Mental Health Factors

A rich dataset combining demographics, academics, lifestyle, and mental health indicators, forming the basis for our analysis.

16K+
Students

14
Features

Survey
Across Multiple
Degrees



Degree



Gender



Depression
& Suicidal
Thoughts



Dietary
Habits



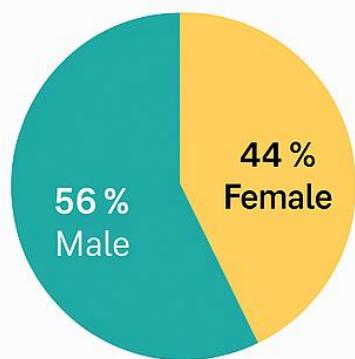
CGPA



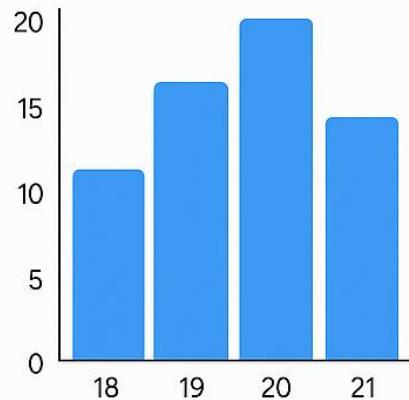
Financial
Stress

Quick Demographic Snapshot

Gender



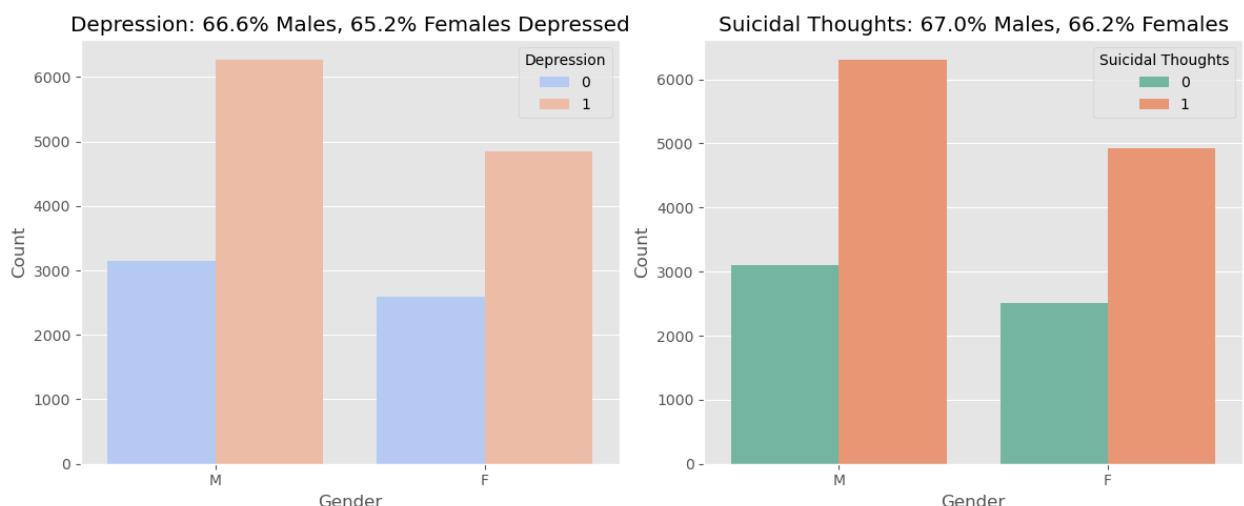
Age Group



Starting Our Exploration: Who Is Most Affected?

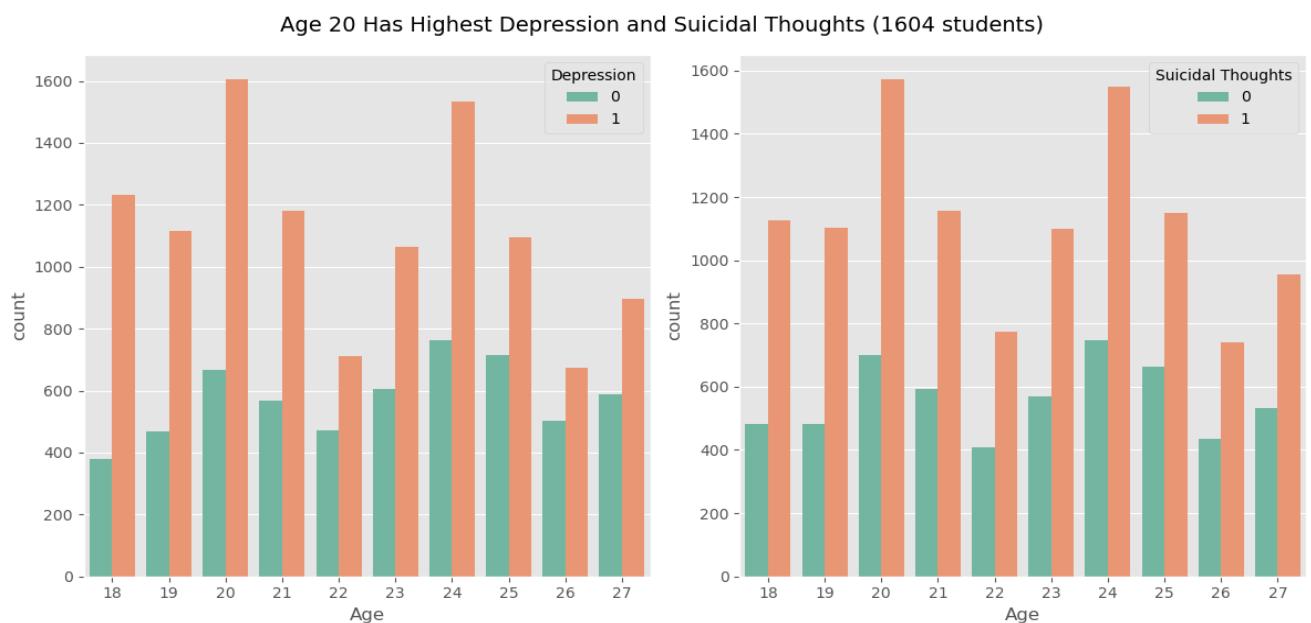
Analyzing mental health trends across gender and age to identify the most vulnerable students.
(Note: 0->No, 1->Yes)

Depression/Suicidal Thoughts vs Gender



I thought only males were stressed, but females are equally carrying the weight 😱

Depression/Suicidal Thoughts vs Age

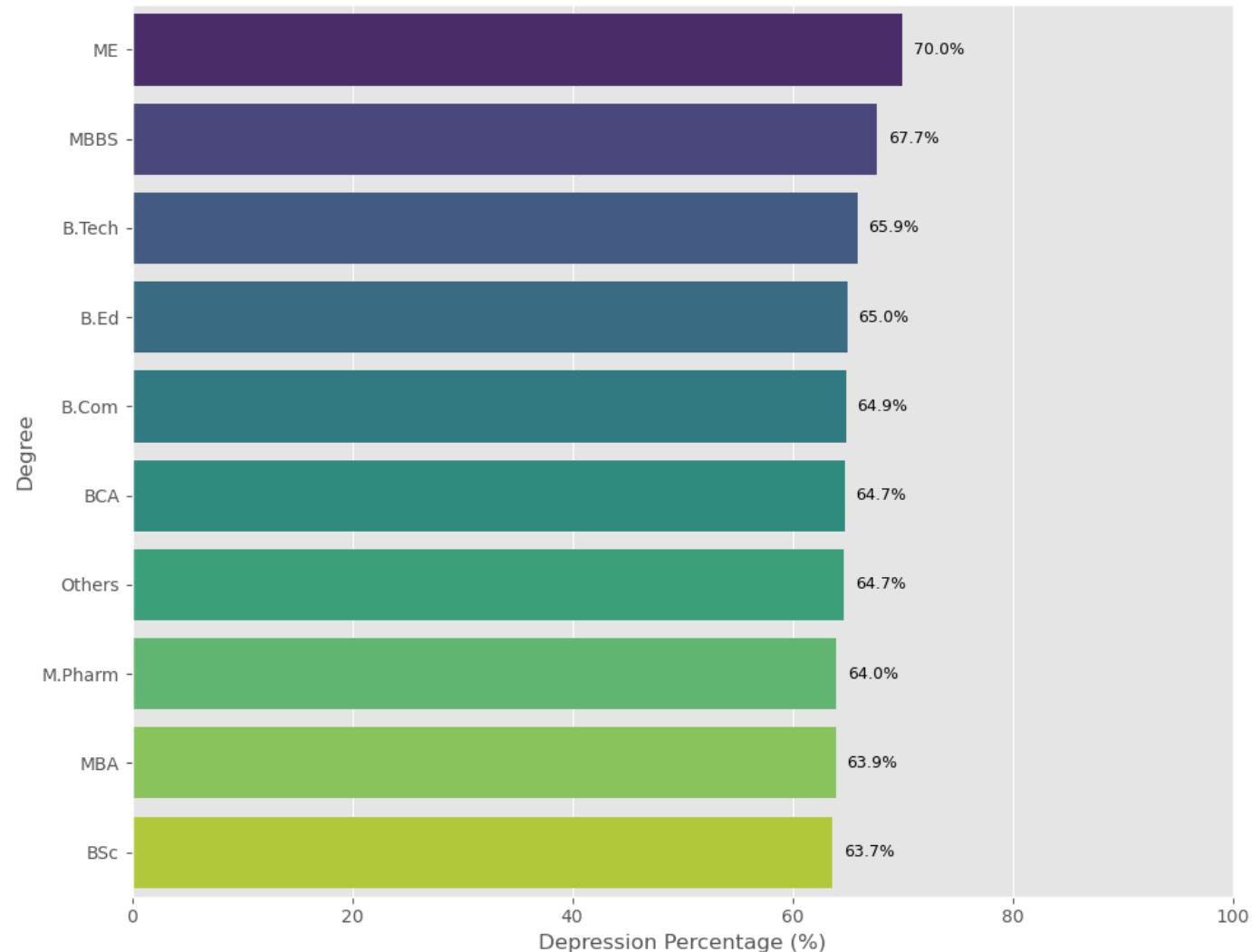


Students around age 20 are the most depressed is this the pressure of adulting? 🤔

Prestige or Pressure? 🎓

The 'proud degrees' are secretly breaking students

Top 10 Degrees with Highest % of Depression



The **top 3** most depressed degrees are Mechanical Engineering (70%), MBBS (67%), and B.Tech (65%).

Ironically, these are the "**prestige degrees**" that **parents, relatives, and society** push students into.

These degrees often come with **zero sleep, endless exams, and crushing expectations** ❤️

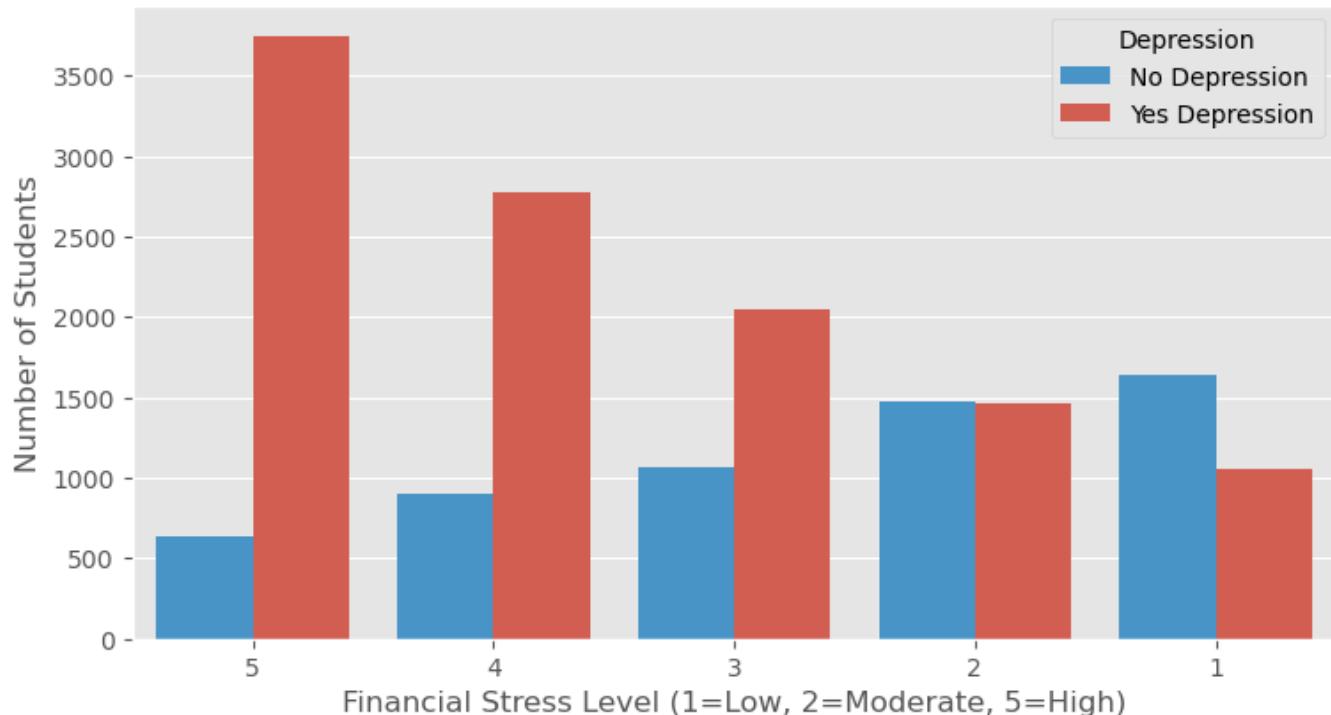
Indian parents be like: 'Do MBBS/B.Tech, beta... '

Meanwhile, students: 'Sure, I also got depression as a major subject'

Financial Stress Isn't Just About Money It's a Mental Health Time Bomb💣

From empty wallets to empty promises, depression starts long before the exam

Financial Stress vs Depression
Highest depression: 5.0 (85.4% depressed)



- **85.4%** of students facing *maximum* financial stress (Level 5) report depression.
- Lower **stress** = lower **depression** that's no coincidence.
- This is more than personal burnout it's a **national policy failure**.

This isn't just stress. This is what happens when education becomes a product.

So where's this stress coming from? Let's talk about the cost of just being a student.

Degree Colleges in India: Post-COVID Fee Hike Highlights

 Course	 Pre-COVID Avg	 Post-COVID Avg	 Hike (%)
B. Com	₹10K-₹25K	₹20K-₹40K	● 60-100%
BBA	₹1.2-2 LPA	₹2.5-5 LPA	● 50-100%
BCA	₹80K-1.5LPA	₹2-4 LPA	● 50-100%
B.Sc IT/CS	₹70K-1.2LPA	₹1.5-3 LPA	● 40-100%
B. Tech Pvt.	₹1-1.5 LPA	₹1.8-2.8 LPA	● 30-70%
Govt. Colleges	Minor hikes	10-25% hikes	● Still affordable

Most of these hikes occurred between **2020-2025**, even as placement rates remained flat or declined.

Colleges raise fees like it's Netflix but give education like Doordarshan
No skills, No jobs, Just stress & rising fees.

Case Study: My Own College

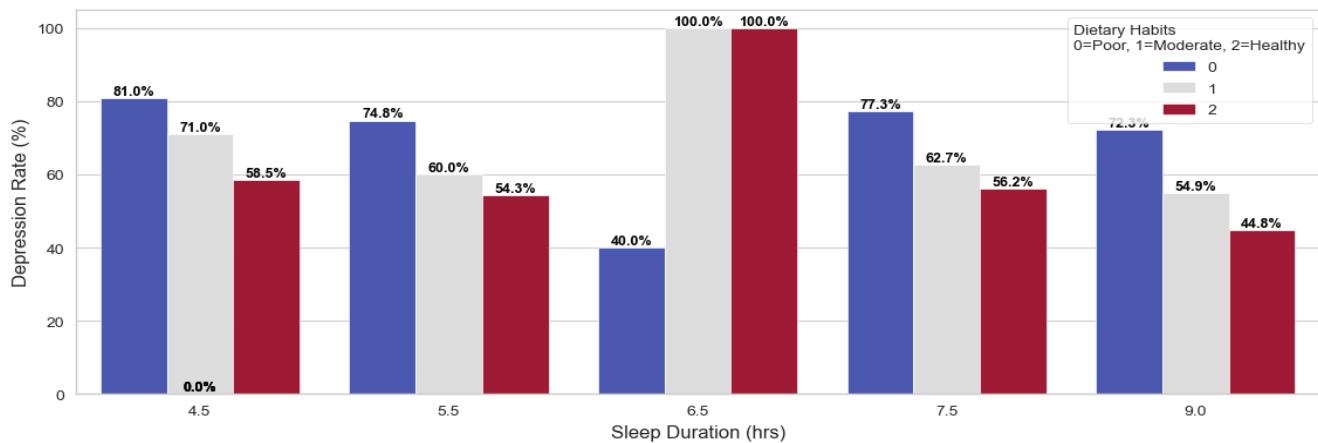
- My fee (2022): ₹80,000/year
- Current fee (2025): ₹1.4 lakh/year
- Written policy: **10%** hike every year
- Actual placement offers in my graduating year: **0 companies, 0 jobs, 0 hope**
- Still, incoming BCA students must now pay over ₹4.5 lakhs for 3 years, with no guaranteed outcome.

In India, Education = Business. And Students = Collateral Damage

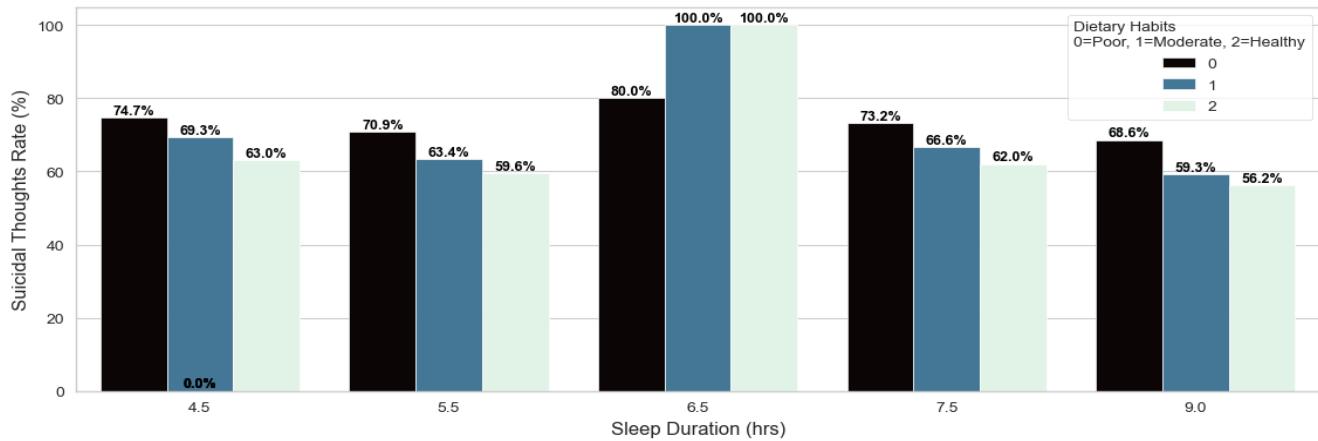
Eating Right. Sleeping Okay. Still Depressed?

When Lifestyle Isn't the Problem but the Pressure Is.

How Sleep + Dietary Habits Affect Depression



How Sleep + Dietary Habits Affect Suicidal Thoughts



🔍 Plot Twist

Students with decent sleep (6.5 hrs) and a healthy diet are showing 100% depression rates.

🧠 What This Tells Us

Even those who seem “put together” might be the most *silently struggling*.

🧠 Why?

In the race to be the **perfect** student, many sacrifice peace for performance.

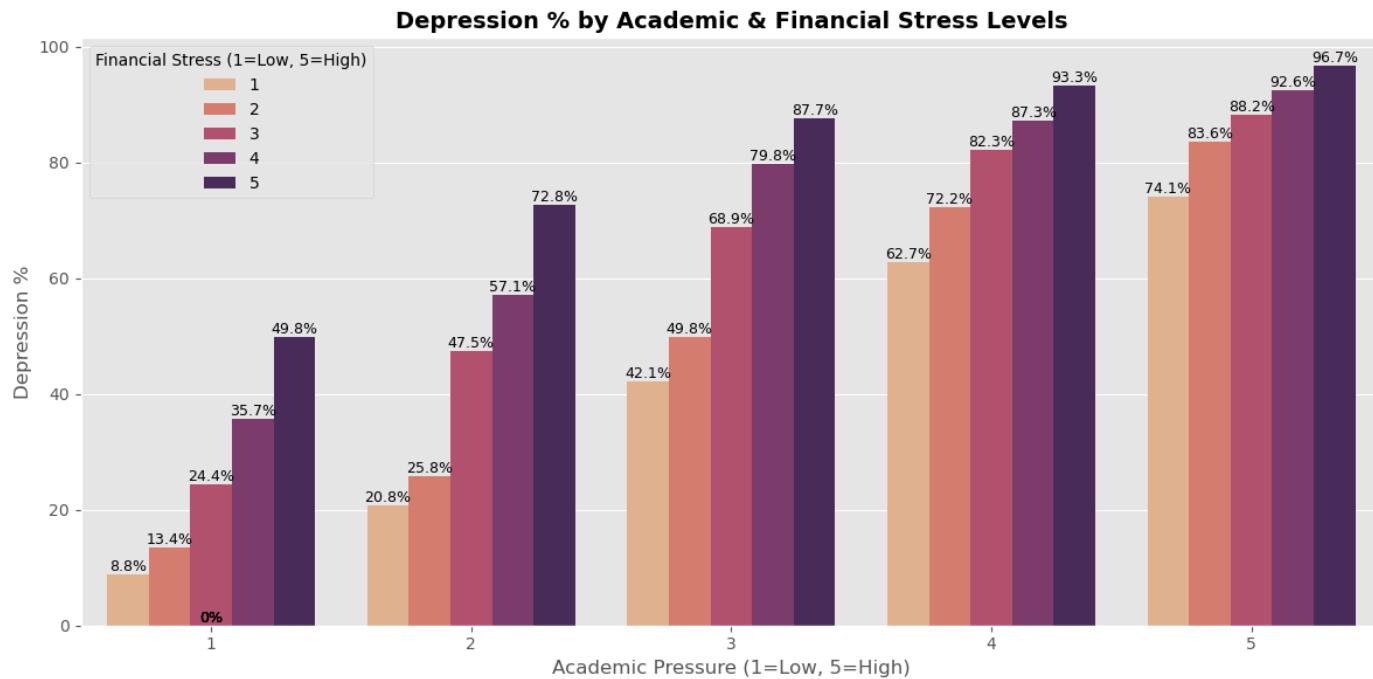
🌟 Key Message

A healthy routine means nothing if the **system is the sickness**.

Perfect outside ≠ Peaceful inside.

Pressure Stacks. Minds Crack

Academic stress is heavy. Add financial stress it becomes *unbearable*



Plot Summary:

- 📉 Low academic + low financial stress = **8.8%** depression.
- 📈 Same academic level, high financial stress = **49.8%** depression.
- 💥 High academic stress + high financial stress = **96%** depression.
- 🌐 Even with **no money stress**, academic pressure alone causes **74%** depression at level 5.

Fixing academics **alone** won't help.

Fixing finance **alone** won't help.

Students need **support, not survival mode**.

See the student.

Not just the grades. Not just the bills.

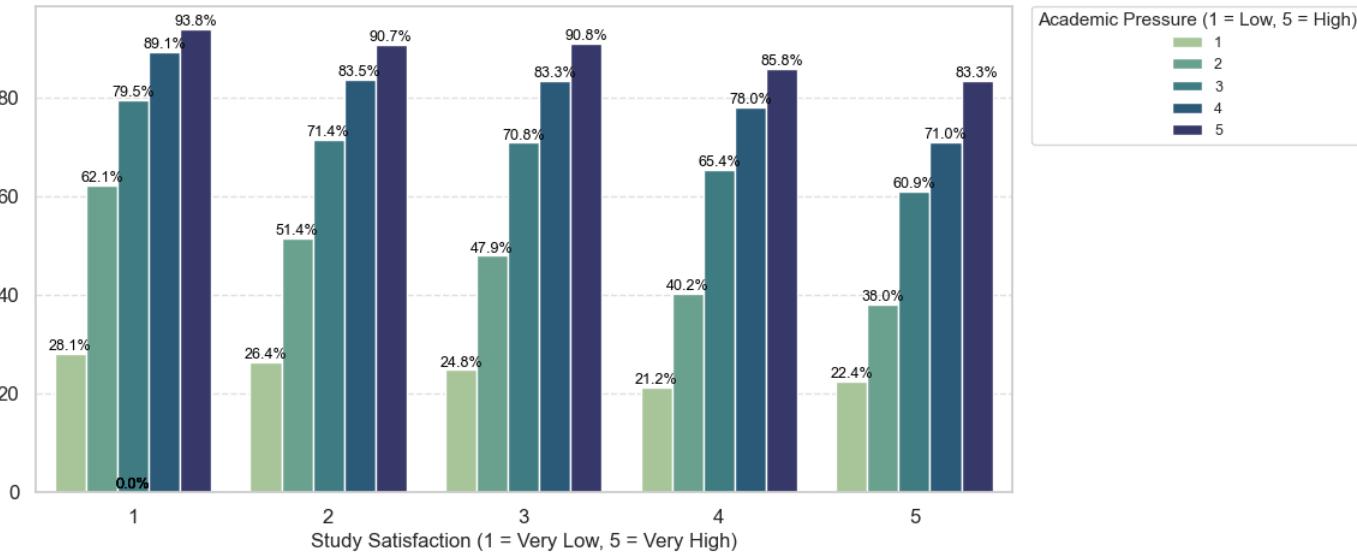
See the **weight** they carry.

Pressure Hurts. Purpose Helps.

Academic stress is lighter when students find meaning in what they study.

Depression Risk Among Students

Effect of Academic Pressure and Study Satisfaction on Depression Levels



Key Insight:

- With Academic Pressure = 5:
 - Depression is **93%** when satisfaction is low.
 - But only **83%** when satisfaction is high.
- With Academic Pressure = 1:
 - Depression stays low (~24%) regardless of satisfaction.

Higher satisfaction = lower depression, even under stress.

It's not just the **amount** of pressure it's whether students feel **connected** to what they're learning.

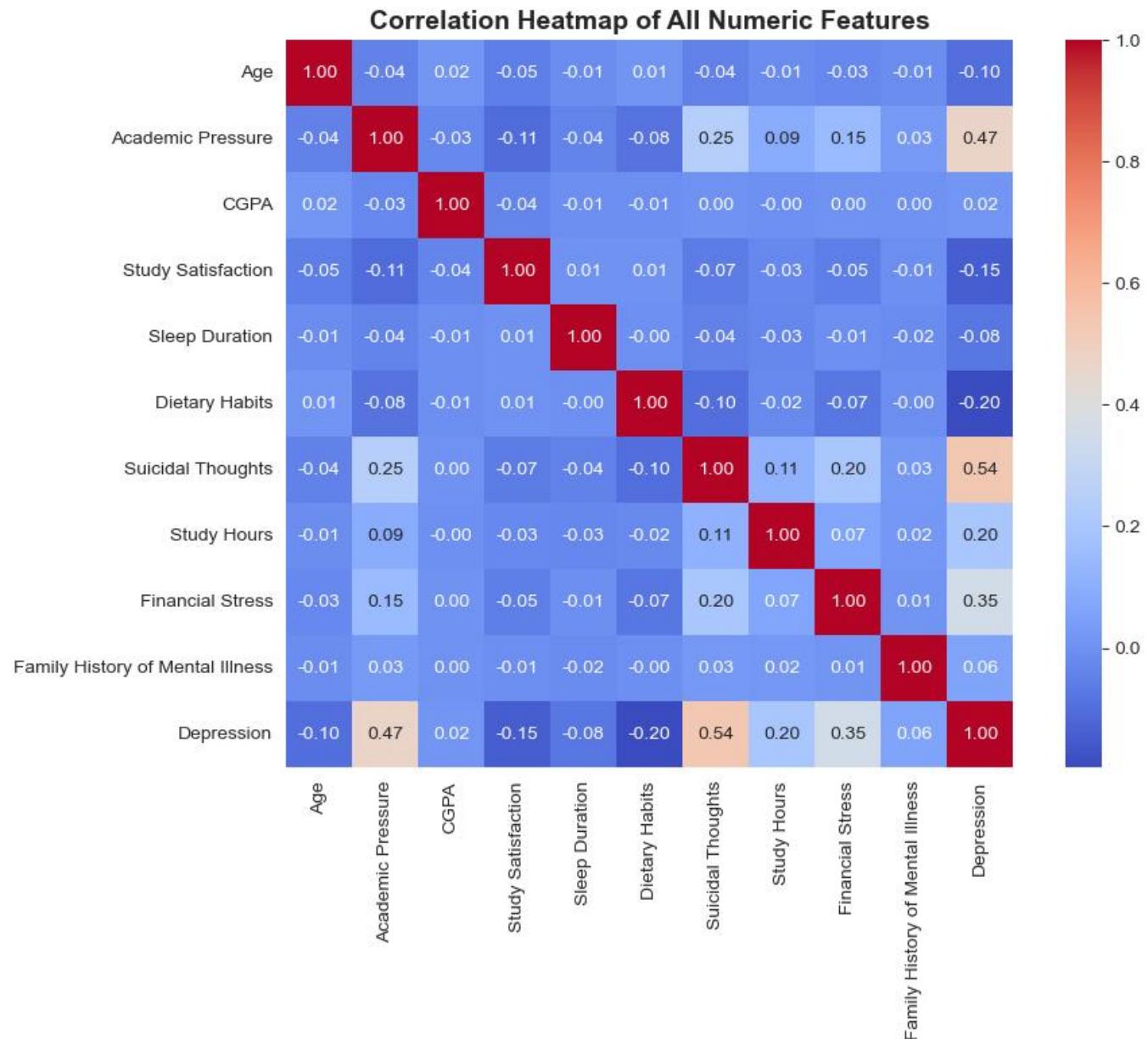
What Can Be Done:

Instead of just **memorizing blindly**,
teach in ways that build **clarity**, **curiosity**, and **confidence**.

If students understand and **value** what they're learning,
they survive the **pressure** they don't break from it.

Behind the Numbers: What Really Drives Student Depression?

Uncovering the silent forces through a correlation heatmap



Academic Pressure (r=0.47): Fuels depression directly

Suicidal Thoughts (r=0.54): Biggest red flag

Financial Stress (r=0.35): Quiet cause, loud impact

CGPA / Study Hours (r=0.02 / 0.20): Barely matter

Diet / Study Satisfaction (r=-0.20 / -0.15): Small shields

It's Not Just in Their Heads It's in the System.

Our students aren't just tired they're overwhelmed, unheard, and silently breaking.

What We Learned:

- **Pressure** (academic & financial) weighs heavier than performance metrics.
 - **Grades & hours studied?** Not as important as we assumed.
 - **Healthy habits** help, but **emotional safety** helps more.
 - **Study satisfaction** and **purpose** are underrated protectors.
 - **Depression and suicidal thoughts** often come together that's not coincidence. It's crisis.
-

What We Must Do:

- **Teach for meaning**, not just marks replace "ratta" with relevance.
 - Create **spaces to talk**, vent, and be vulnerable without judgment.
 - Reduce **perform-or-perish pressure** by redesigning how we define success.
 - Make **mental health support a default**, not a luxury.
 - Support students who look "fine" because they often aren't.
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Final Message:

We don't need more perfect students.

We need **happier, healthier, heard humans.**

The system must stop burning out the very minds it aims to build.