

Stress among Students — A Descriptive Study

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ABSTRACT: *Technology advancements have always helped to constantly multitask and take more and more work and targets due to which people are under stern time pressures and are constantly moving which leads to stress. Increasing number of people seems to be overcharged and overburdened. People are finding it difficult to keep up their energy levels up and live a normal, peaceful life; instead most of their useful time gets wasted in coping from stress.*

This paper focuses on finding the stress level of management students who are working under immense pressure by meeting day to day deadlines, studying a number of subjects at a time, doing to many assignments and submitting the term projects on deadlines. Apart from fulfilling their course requirement, students also have to deal with different other pressures and fulfill their parent's expectations. This study is done with the objective of discovering the causes of stress in the lives of students, the effects of stress, identifying the various variables associated with it and establishing definite relationships between these variables. The study also tries to identify the prominent underlying variables responsible for causing stress. For this a comprehensive survey via an online questionnaire has been conducted. This paper uses a descriptive methodology and focuses to find the effect of different causes on the stress levels and hence is an insight into the behavioral patterns of students when they experience the same.

Keywords: *Stress quotient; Stress stimulants; peer pressure; stress factors; parental expectations.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Everyone in this new world is in the race of getting and achieving as much as possible. Everybody wants the best piece of the cake that too with cream and cherry on the top. When everybody is in for the race and the goal is same, the competition becomes tough. Money is the root cause of everything and man has become the money making machine. To achieve success, luxuries, and a life full of convenience one has to work hard.

Day-to-day life used to be very different for many people. People used to have more time to play and hang around with friends and family. They could go on vacations without worrying about the work. But now because of the accelerating pace of modern life and constant change, most people feel themselves under extreme pressures and this leads to stress. Because of this, life has now become full of hassles, deadlines, frustrations and demands. For many people, stress is so common that it has become a way of life. Stress is not always bad. It sometimes helps people and motivates them to perform better. A certain level of stress is healthy and can be motivating. In fact, if balanced correctly, stress can be a positive element in our lives.

According to American Psychological Association, Stress is a normal psychological and physical reaction to the ever increasing demands of life. Stress is a normal physical response to events that make people feel threatened or upset the life's balance in some way. **Stress** is a constant for many of us because we live in a world full of stress. Stress can be about money,

marriage, job security, health issues, about studies, about children, about parents and can be about other relationships.

Academic stress among students is now the talk of the town and one of the very interesting topics to be studied. The earlier studies have identified different stressors affecting students. Specifically Students entering into the professional education needs to face many challenges to which they have never been exposed earlier. The pressure of achieving good grades and achieving a degree is very high. The potential sources of stress for these include excessive and unclear assignments, difficult worksheets, lengthy projects, uncomfortable classrooms, new classmates and new environment and in addition to this time pressures and deadlines may also be the sources of stress. Do these states of affairs are really the areas of concern and are causing academic stress?

2. STRESS TO STUDENTS

Stress is inevitable. Stress is an everyday occurrence and regardless of the profession of a person it cannot be eradicated from life because of the demands of our fast-paced and busy lives. Stress may occur to an adult, to a housewife, to a youngster or even to a student. Students' stress is usually related to everyday experiences, worries and challenges at home, in college, in the community and within the peer group. A student may feel stressed because of various factors like social issues relating to peer group and group of friends and pressures related to that. It can be due to the family issues like family and the relationships or can be work leisure balance like maintaining balance between studies and other activities like hobbies.

Student may experience stress resulting from swaggering, ragging, social isolation, a sense of dissatisfaction, academic difficulties and new environment. The impact of ongoing stress, whether resolved or unresolved, can lead to feelings of eagerness, slump, natural frustration, depression, and poor assiduity, loss of compatibility, physical sickness, fatigue, sleep disorders and poor understanding. College can be stressful for many reasons: some get stressed because of a new environment, sudden changes in environment, loss of solace or greater academic requirements, loads of assignments, competitions with fellow students, a crest of success, a lump of failures, poor relationships with other students, fear of teachers, overcrowded or noisy lecture halls, semester/trimester system, multiple subjects and subject related problems and inadequate resources to perform academic work. Last but not the least, very important is the pressure to perform well in the examination. This makes academic environment very stressful. When students feel stressed at college, they may resort to the excessive use of stimulants like tea or coffee or they may indulge in different types of intoxicants like alcohol, tobacco or drugs.



College life can be sometimes so stressful that students cannot function properly. Their health, overall performance, ability to think and social life can all suffer when stress becomes too much to handle. Stress may lead to severe and grave health conditions including high blood pressure, digestive issues, depression, and anxiety and they become prone to illness. Stress can affect student's academic life.

Prof. Nidhi, an experienced academician says that: *There is nobody in the world, which is not stressed due to one or other reason. Stress does not come alone; it brings anxiety, fear and anger along with it. Students are more prone to stress due to lot of reasons viz. curriculum load, competition, pressure from home to prove themselves, social activities etc. Under stress, the students become irritated on small things, remain nervous all the day and are usually unable to handle situations. Choosing to deal with stress may result into over thinking, smoking, or over eating. But every one of us should live knowing that it's just a matter of choice. Our health, happiness and life depend on it. A simple mantra to deal with stress is to identify the reason behind it, find a timely solution and if no solution is within the sight, better ignore it.*

3. PURPOSE OF STUDY

Due to extreme stress in this fast paced world a student's social relations both within the institution and outside are affected. There are many milestones which college students have to overpower in order to achieve their optimum academic performance. This highlights the need for research to examine the root cause of academic stress faced by students at various levels of learning at management institutions. In this regard, this paper tries to identify the different levels of stress which students are facing and to know the frequency of and the variables causing stress. It also tries to find out the dependence and independence of various factors involved.

4. OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of this study are:

1. To know the level of stress among students.
2. To find out the factors causing stress.
3. The dependence of usage of stimulants or drug intake and frequency of stress.
4. The dependence of frequency of stress and the peer pressure.
5. The dependence of parental expectations and the frequency of stress.

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study follows a systematic and scientific approach. The Research Methodology used here is descriptive in nature. Since already much has been said and written on similar topics across various studies, this study is aimed to gain further insight into the topic and look at it with a new perspective. For this, a survey is conducted on 100 students of the B school where I am working, was taken and recorded using an online questionnaire. It had questions on the following categories:

1. Bio-data: to gain an idea about the sample demographics like age group, etc.
2. Causes of stress: Factors that the respondents believed are causes for stress in their lives.
3. Effects of stress: The perceived effects of stress on the life and behaviour patterns of the respondents.

5.1 Hypothesis

A research always starts with a presumption. The assumption is based on some variables under study. This study also started with some assumptions. Prior to collection of data and while designing the questionnaire, the following variables were identified on the basis of which the

hypothesis is framed and then it is to be tested to give conclusive proof about the relationships between these variables, if any. The variables are:

- Frequency of stress occurrence
- Frequency of use of caffeine stimulants
- Degree of stress/ Levels of stress
- Degree of importance of parental expectations
- Degree of peer pressure relevance

On the basis of these variables, the following hypotheses are framed:

H₀: The frequency of stimulant's (like tea or coffee) use is independent on the frequency of stress occurrence.

H₀: The frequency of stress is independent of parental expectations.

The idea here is to test the dependence of the different variables on the frequency of stress. To test the hypothesis, Chi square test is used. Since this study is of descriptive nature and involved a survey, the data collected is primary data.

5.2 Data Analysis and Testing

While analyzing the data collected from the study many variables were identified. The first and the foremost is the frequency of stress. We know that students are affected by stress but how and when and up to what level, knowing that is very important. Are they regularly under it or there is some specific period or occasion when they are stressed. It is very important to know whether they are usually stressed because of the environment of the institute or they feel stressed when they have to follow some deadline or some submission of project on a particular date has to be done. Out of 100 students, it was found that almost all the students are affected by stress. The study shows the following result:

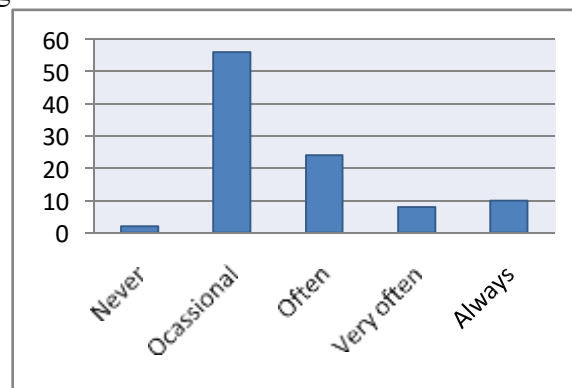


Fig 1: Levels of Stress among Students

Around 56% of the students said that they experience stress occasionally. 24% said often they are affected by stress. 10% said that they are always under stress. Only 2% said that they never feel stress in studies. This infers that more than half of the students under study feel the pressure under some specific circumstances. Only the negligible numbers of students never feel stress. The other important variable which is identified is about the cause of the stress. What are the reasons because of which the level of stress increases or decreases? As discussed earlier there can be many factors like, tests and examinations, assignment and project submission, social issues as in the peer pressure and pressure because of friend's competitiveness, social issues involving family pressures and parental expectations or the work life balance issues which is between studies and accessing hobbies

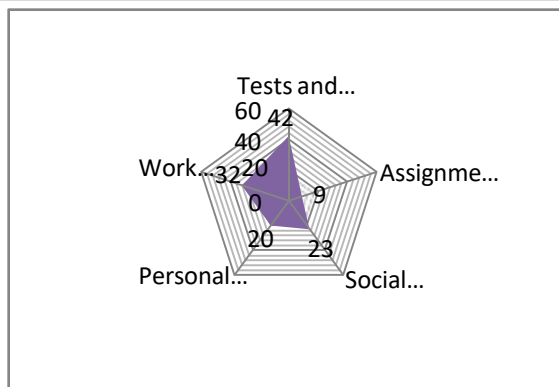


Fig 2: Causes of Stress among Students

The result says that 42 out of 100 students feel stressed because of tests and examination, 32 said the reason is the work life balance issues. Very close to them are the two other group of students. 23 said the stress is due to social issues and 20 said due to personal issues. Only 9 said it is due to assignments that means students are used to writing assignments and don't feel stressed because of that.

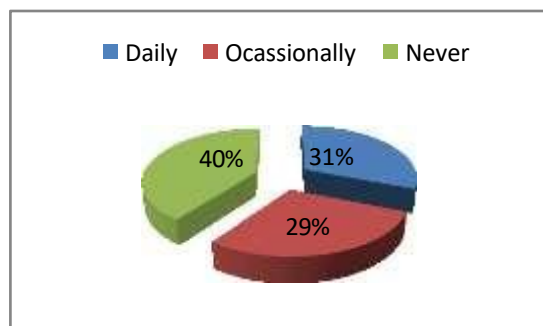


Fig 3: Levels of Stress among Students

When stress engulfs a student's mind and his life, they are not able to cope the stress and they indulge into the use of stimulants and intoxicants. When asked, the students got divided into three clusters. The major cluster was formed of 40 students saying that they never indulge into such activities. But a very good amount of students said that they daily use stimulants to avoid stress and the count are 31%. 75% students said no matter how much is the stress, they never take drugs or use tobacco. The analysis shows that 55% of the students agree that peer pressure enhances stress while 36% said that their social status hardly affect their state of mind. It was surprising to study that only 37% students believe that parental expectations put pressure on them and they are not pressurized much because of this factor.

Earlier whenever we mentioned the causes of stress, we talked about the environment, the social or personal reasons but one of the very important point is to know what students think and against whom they compete with. They were given basic three options which were, against themselves, against immediate competitor and against the topper. 57% students said that they just compete against themselves. They believe in increasing their grades by motivating themselves. They don't look to anybody for it. A very interesting point that came up is 24% students said that they don't believe in competition. They don't compete instead they just believe in studying and working hard. Rest 12% responded that they are stressed as they compete against the immediate competitor.

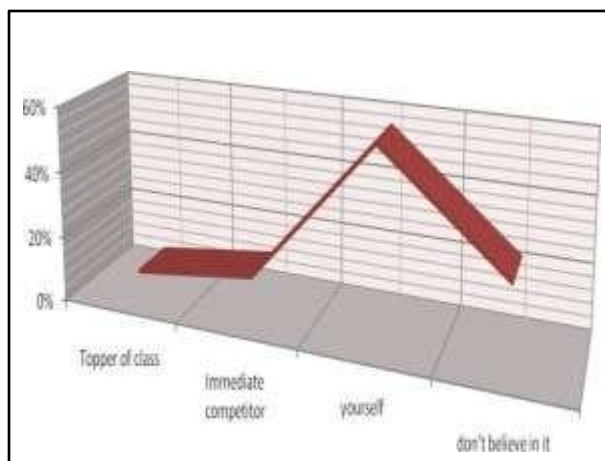


Fig 4: Competition among Students

We expected that mentors and teachers can be a good source of reducing stress as students can feel relaxed, light and motivated talking to mentors. When asked, 59% students said that the advice of their mentors reduces their stress and encourages them. But against that 31% said this advice has no effect on them; neither positive nor negative.

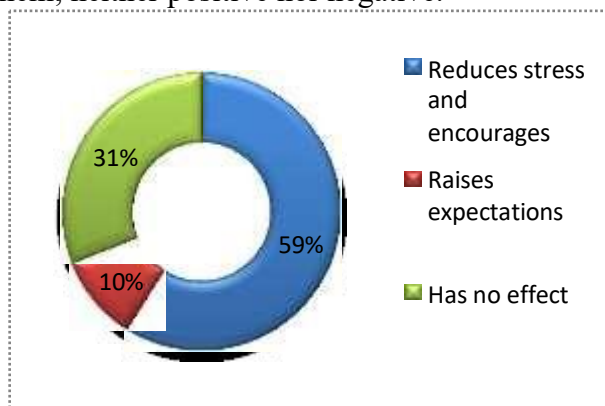


Fig 5: Effect of Mentoring from Teachers

Also, few variables were identified and hypothesis is tested using the chi square tests. The first Hypothesis is:

H₀: The frequency of stimulant's use and the level of stress are independent of each other.

H_a: The frequency of stimulant's use and the level of stress are dependent of each other.

Assuming the level of significance to be 5% the tabulated value calculated came out to be, $\chi^2_{tab} = 15.507$ and the calculated value of χ^2 i.e. χ^2_{cal} , came out to be 0.098579. On comparison against χ^2_{tab} , it is realized that the value of χ^2_{cal} is smaller hence, H₀ is accepted i.e. the hypothesis, frequency of caffeine stimulant use is independent on the frequency of stress occurrence is accepted.

The second hypothesis is: H₀: The frequency of stress is independent of parental expectations. Again chi square was applied using 5% level of significance. It was found that $\chi^2_{tab} = 26.296$ and the calculated value of χ^2 i.e. χ^2_{cal} , came out to be 27.171. On comparison against χ^2_{tab} , it is realized that the value of χ^2_{cal} is greater hence, H₀ is rejected i.e. the hypothesis, frequency of stress is independent on parental expectations is rejected and hence it says that the level of stress increases as the parental expectations increases.

6. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The above survey clearly infers the following points:

56% of students said they experience stress occasionally. There are many factors which cause stress in a student's life but 42%, which is highest, agreed that maximum pressure is built whenever there is some test or examination approaching. More than half of the respondents rated 4 as their level of stress on a scale of 1 to 5. The opinion about whether they get affected by their friends opinion, the response was scattered, still the majority i.e. 38% rated it 2 on a scale of 1 to 5 which infers that they don't care about their social status and it doesn't affect the stress in their life. No matter how stressed respondents are the survey says that 75% of them never indulge in the use of intoxicants. A very good finding here is that the students feel very relaxed and motivated when their mentors coach them. Their guidance encourages them to perform better and relieve stress too. This coaching helps them to be confident and they keep themselves as the benchmark. They never compete with each other, they believe in competing with themselves.

7. CONCLUSION

From the results of analysis, it was observed that a student's life can be very pressurized and stressful. Students experience stress due to many reasons like peer pressure, social pressures, work life balance, personal issues and the environment of the institute, where they are studying. Maximum stress is experienced due to tests and assignments and their deadlines. It was found that students experience stress mostly because of peer pressure and parental expectations. They are not much affected by their competitors in class. It is also observed that students compete with themselves and don't compete with others. Advice and counseling of mentors is one thing which helps them relieving from stress and motivates them. The test says that the students under analysis don't indulge in stimulants and intoxicants when they feel stressed. They sometimes use tea/coffee but not regularly and they are not addicted. The hypothesis that was framed about a relationship between the identified variables, frequency of occurrence of stress and frequency of use of caffeine stimulants, proved that latter is independent on the former and define the behavior of students.

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