



EFFECT OF ACADEMIC STRESS ON ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF COLLEGE STUDENTS

Dr. Manju Mishra

Associate Professor, Deptt of Psychology
H.R.P.G. College, Khalilabad, SantKabirnagar (UP)

ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the effect of academic stress on college students' achievement and the difference in stress level of male and female students. One hundred and fifty undergraduate students, between the age ranges 18-22 years, participated in the study. Seventy five were male students and remaining seventy five were female students. Academic stress scale was used to measure the stress level and students' marks in last exams were taken as measure of academic achievement. The students scoring above 55% of marks were taken in high achiever group and students scoring below 55% of mark were taken in low achiever group.

Statistical analyses were conducted to analyze the obtained data. The results revealed the significant effect of academic stress on students' achievement. Highly stressed students scored lesser marks while less stressed students scored higher marks in the examination. A significant difference in academic stress level of male and female student was also found. Results and implications of the study have been discussed.

Keywords: Academic stress, Achievement, Exams, Grades, Parental Expectations, Fear of Failure.

Introduction

Academic stress is the anxiety and stress related to education and academics. Kadapatti and Vijaylaxmi, (2012) defined academic stress as a product of a combination of academic related demands that exceeded the adaptive resources available to an individual. Bisht (2014) defined academic stress as a demand related to academics that exceeded the available resources internal or external as cognitively appeared by the student involved. According to Bisht, academic stress echoes individual's perception of academic frustration, academic conflict, academic pressure and academic anxiety. Psychologists have extensively researched over academic stressors. They have identified the several important one: Poor time management – Macan et al (1990), studying for exams - Baldwin et al (1990), coursework - Robotham (2008), setting realistic academic targets - Good and Brophy (1986), adjustment during the transition period - Baker (2003), high competitiveness among students and information overload - Sinha et al (2001), pressure from studies - Dahlin (2005), requirement to meet assessment deadlines - Misra et al (2000), college admission procedure - Conner et al (2010) and course load – Talib, N., M. Zia - ur - Rahman (2012) have been found to be main academic stressors for college students.

Abouserie (1994) found that students are most stressed at time of examination and main pressures are exams, competition for grades, shortage of time, vast syllabus etc. George Essel and Patrick Owusu (2017) have listed important academic stressors felt by college students. The increased work load, lower grades, longer hours of study, language difficulties, procrastination, examination, missing lectures, frustration due to misunderstanding were found to be main stressors of students by them.

Increased work load / home work assignments

Too much load of homework and assignments make students tense. They face a lot of trouble in completing their assignments in given time limit. They are unable to give proper time to different study related activities and are all the time puzzled and anxious. Their academic performance also deteriorates.

Low Marks

Every student aspires to score higher marks in the examination. But many a times they do not score as per their expectation level, they get nervous and lose confidence. Sometimes they try to harm themselves.

Longer Study Hours

Students have a very tight study schedule. They hardly get time for leisure and other activities of their choice. The long hours to study make them bored and monotonous. They are always busy in their lectures, homework and assignments and hardly get time for their hobbies and recreation.

Language problem

Sometimes language problem also disturbs students. Especially when Hindi medium students go for English medium, they face lots of difficulties. They become less confident and less vocal in the class.

Procrastination

Procrastination is the avoidance of doing a task which needs to be completed. It is act of accomplishing more pleasurable things and lingering less pleasurable and critical assignments. This approach is very detrimental for the students as they gradually lose interest in their assigned task and they become stressed for not completing their assignments on scheduled time.

Examinations

Examination poses the greatest threat to the students. Fear of not performing well in exams makes them ill. Sometimes fear of exam negatively influences students' physical and psychological well-being. They report lack of concentration in studies before exam night, sleep disturbance, forgetting everything learned and nervousness, scoring bad grades scares them for receiving parental rejection and peer pressure.

Missing Lectures

Students often miss lectures for fun and enjoyment. But when the lecture is missed, the students find it difficult to recollect the matter from other students; they lag behind in studies gradually. Their burden increases and makes them stressed.

Parental Expectation

Every parent wants his child to perform best in studies and bring them fame in society but parents do not assess the capability of their child. They burden their child with their higher expectations. The child is very stressed because of his parent's high expectations. He feels how he will face his parents if he does not perform up to parents expectations. Many students have committed suicide due to their parent's unrealistic expectation.

Future worries

Students are often stressed about their career and future plans. They are afraid of not attaining admission in desired college and not getting proper placement thereafter. There is very cut throat competition for admission in professional and good colleges and students always worry for their admission and good future.

Gender and Academic stress

Contradictory findings have been reported on influence of gender on stress. Misra and Castilio (2004) have found that men and women are different in their perception and reaction to stress. Jogaratham and Buchanam (2004) found significant differences between male and female students on time pressure dimension. In the same way, Sulaiman et al (2009) found that female students have experienced different stress than male students because of their extra emotional and sensitive attitude towards the surrounding. Similar results have been found in other studies. Mazumdar (2012), Sani (2012), Sharma et al (2012) but others have also found contradictory findings. Watson (2002) found insignificant difference in perceiving stress level of male and female students. In the same way, Bhosle(2014), Omonyi and Ogunsanmi (2012) found no significant difference between male and female on academic stress. Sulaiman et al (2009) explained that this difference is due to female emotional and sensitive character and attitude to the environment.

Literature review

Academic stress leads to many positive and negative consequences to the students, Stress is beneficial, if it is in moderate amount. It motivates to prepare students for future accomplishments but exam stress is very dangerous. It leads to many mental and psychological problems in students. Depression, anxiety, nervousness are common in stressed students. Stress comes at its peak at the time of exam and interview. Several students contemplate or even commit suicide due to uncontrolled academic stress. Stress also affects students' academic performance. Impact of stress on academic achievements have been found in many studies like Ahmad et al (2013), Thawabich and Quaisty (2012), Atindabila (2011), Angola and Ontori (2009), Chen (2009), Kelly et al (2001) but stress can also be beneficial for academic achievement. Kaplan and Sadock (2000), Linn and Zeppy (1984) have suggested that an optimal level of stress enhances learning ability. But many researchers have found contradictory results. Saipanish (2003) found that stress influence negatively learning and memory. Neimi and Vaiomaki (1999) have suggested that stress can cause physical and mental health problems, reduce students self confidence. Thus contradictory finding are available on the influence of stress on academic achievement. On one hand, Sohail (2013), Taylos and Owusi–Banahan (2010), Wombie (2005) have demonstrated negative relation of stress with students' performance. But Siraj (2014), Habibah et al (2011), Rafidahl (2009) have found no significant influence of stress on students' performance. Zajacova et al (2005) has also found no significant impact of stress on students' academic success. Rafidah et al (2009) have examined the impacts of stress on academic performance of pre diploma science students at the University of Technology MARA Magasia but they did not found that stress affected academic performance of the students. In another study, Siraj (2014) investigated the association between stress level and academic performance in medical students. They found that respondents with a high and severe stress level score higher grade point average (CGPA). Students were able to cope with stress effectively; the negative effect of stress could not influence their academic performance.

Significance of the Present Study

This study aims to investigate the stress level of college students. College students are the youth and the youth is the future of any nation. If the youth will be in stress how will he be able to excel in his carrier and subsequently contribute in national program. Youth's well being is more important. This study findings will contribute in identifying the main stressors of college

students and way to handle them and enhance the physical and mental well being of today's student .

Objectives of the study

The study has mainly two objectives-

- (1) To study the difference in academic stress level of male and female college students.
- (2) To study of the impact of academic stress on students academic achievement.

Hypothesis

Following hypothesis were formulated in the study

1. Academic stress will be higher in male students as compared to female students.
2. Academic stress will influence students' academic achievements.

Method

Instruments

- (i) Academic stress scale – A Hindi translation of academic stress scale of R Balaji Rao (2000) was used to study academic stress of students. This scale consists of 15 items and each item has five response i.e no stress, slight stress, moderate stress, high stress and extremely high stress. Scoring is done by assigning 0 to 4 mark and maximum marks was 160. High scores indicator high stress level and low score on the scale indicates low stress level.
- (ii) Academic Achievement Marks scored in the last exam were considered as measure of achievement. 55% and above marks were considered high achievement and below 55% marks were considered lower achievement.

Sample

The sample was consisted of 150 college students. They were selected using random sampling technique. Age range was 18-22 year. 75 participants were female student studying at undergraduates' college of Santkabirnagar districts. Students were divided into two achiever group. Low achiever group comprised of students less than 55% marks in last exams. High achiever group comprised of 55% or more scoring students.

Procedure

Data was collected in classrooms at the Postgraduate College of Santkabir Nagar on undergraduate students. Students' percentages of marks obtained in last exam were inquired. With prior permission of teacher of the class, the academic stress scale was administered among the male and female students.

Result

Descriptive analysis (Mean and SD) and differential analysis (t – test) were conducted to analyze the obtained data. The results have been presented in table 1 and 2. Table 1 shows that mean score of male students was 64.50 (SD=10.60) and the mean score of academic stream of female students was 60.28 (SD=6.80). t-test was found to be significant at 0.01 level of significance. This means that there is a statistically significant difference in score of academic stress of male and female students. This results support the first hypothesis of the study.

Table 2 present the mean SD and t - test of low and high achiever students' level of academic stream. It is evident from the table that mean score of low achieving group is 72.40 (S.D.=12.62) while mean score of high achieving group is 63.80 (S.D.=6.92). It means that higher level of stressed is related with low achievement. Significance t-test also reveals that there is a statistically significant difference in stress level of low and high achieving groups of students. High achievers are low stressed and low achievers are highly stressed. The second hypothesis of the study is also confirmed.

Thus the main findings of the present study are:

1. Male students were found to more academically stress than female students.
2. Academic stress negatively influenced level of academic achievement of college students.

Table1: Mean, S.D. and t-ratio of academic stress scale score of male and female college students.

Sample	N	Mean	S.D.	SEd	T	Level of significant
Male	75	64.50	10.60	1.46	3.09	0.01
Female	75	60.28	6.80			

Table2: Mean, S.D. and t- test of academic stress scale score of low and achiever students.

Sample	N	Mean	S.D.	SEd	t	Level of significant
Low Achiever group	90	72.40	12.62	1.59	5.40	0.01
High Achiever group	60	63.80	6.92			

Discussion

Thus, the results clearly demonstrate the impact of academic stress and performance in exams. Significant t-test shows that there is a statistically significant difference in academic stress level of low achiever and high achiever group of students. Students with lower marks percentage reported significantly higher level of stress as compared to high achiever students. It appears that different academic stressors like, time pressure, competition with fellow students, unhealthy relations with classmate and teachers, long and vast syllabus exert too much pressure on students. Because of being stressed, students also do not perform better in examination. While those students, who study regularly and in planned way for examination are less stressed and they perform better in examination and score higher marks. So, stress has negatively influenced students' marks. The lower the stress, higher the marks were found in the study. Similar findings have been reported in many studies. Sohail (2013), Taylor and Owusi-Banadama (2010), Wombie (2005), Hatcher and Prus (1991) have found that stress negatively affected academic achievement and performance of students.

Misra and Mckean (2000), Dusselier et al (2008) have found a strong relationship between students stress level and decreased academic performance. Dwyer and Cummings (2001) have found that the stress was the most common factor affecting students academic performance. Williamson et al (2005) have found that in anxious and depressed youth, stressful life events are considerably increased which in turn leads to low performance in academics.

Results also reveal significant difference in academic stress level of male and female students. Academic stress was found to be higher in male students as compared to female students. It appears that female students study regularly, are more serious towards classes and exams, attend lectures, complete all assignment on time and rarely get distracted by the other activities going in the college campus and society. They hardly compromise over their studies. That is why female students experience lesser stress and their performance is also better than male students. On the other hand, male students get distracted easily in other extracurricular and social activities and are not very regular and planned towards studies. They mostly try to study at the time of examination and that is why they are more stressed. They are not fully prepared for the examination, get scared by fear of getting lower grades or failing in the exam. This gender difference has been supported in many studies. Mazumdar (2012), Sulaiman et al (2009), Misra and Castillo (2004) have found different stress level of male and female students. Misra and Castillo (2004) have concluded that perception and reaction to stress is different in both genders. Jogaratam and Buchanam (2004) found a significant difference between male and female students on time pressure factor of stress. Sulaiman, Hassan, Sopian and Abdullah (2009) have also found different stress level of male and female students.

Conclusion

To conclude, it can be stated that academic stress level of students is negatively affecting their academic performance and achievement. Stress is hindering students' concentration in study and study habits and decreasing their academic success. Male students are more stressed than female students. Female students are more disciplined and regular in their studies. So they experience lesser stress at college/ University and perform better in academics. It is therefore suggested that student should learn to be less stressed so that they may perform better in the academic examinations.

Implications of the Study

Finding of the study will help teachers, parents and educational institutions to understand the main causes of stress of students at school/college level. Awareness about the main causes of stress at school/college will facilitate in reducing the stress level of students. Thus findings will enrich the academia and also benefit the society by reducing the stress level of students and enhancing their academic achievements.

References

- Agolla, J.E. and Ongori, H (2009). “An Assessment of Academic Stress among Undergraduate Students: The Case of University of Botswana”, *Educational Research and Review*, 4 (2): 63-70
- Ahmed, U.A., Rizandm., Ramzan (2013), “Assessment of Stress and Stressors: A Study on Management Students”, *Interdisciplinary Journal of Contemporary Research in Business*”, 4(9): 217-222
- Auerbach, M.S. and Grambling, S.E. (1998), “Stress Management”, *Psychological Foundations U.S.A: Prentice-Hall, Inc*,
- Baker, S.R. (2003), “A prospective longitudinal investigation of social problem- solving appraisals on adjustment to university, stress, health and academic motivation and performance”, *Personality and Individual Differences*, 35: 569- 591
- Baldwin, D.A., Wilkinsonand F.C., Barkley D.C. (2009), “Effective Management of Student Employment: Organising for Standard Deployment in Academic Libraries”, Englewood: Libraries Unlimited, Inc
- Bernstein, D.A. Penner, L.A., Stewart, A.C. and Roy, E.J. (2008), “Psychology”. 8th editon, Boston-New York: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Bhosale (2014), “A study of Academic Stress and Gender Difference”, *Indian Streams Research Journal*. 4(6): 1-4
- Bisht, A. R. (1980), “A Study of Stress in Relation to School Climate and Academic Achievement (Age group 13- 17). In Krishan, (2014), “Academic Stress among Adolescent in Relation to Intelligence and Demographic Factors”, *American International Journal of Research in Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences*, 123- 129
- Carveth J.A., Gesse, T., Moss N. (1996), “Survival strategies for nurse-midwifery students”. *Journal of Nurse-Midwifery*, 41 (1), 50-54
- Corner, J.D., Pope, Galloway, M. (2010), “Success with Less Stress”, *Health and Learning*, 67(4): 54- 58
- Dahlin, M., Joneborg, N., Runeson, B. (2005), “Stress and Depression among Medical Students: A Cross- Sectional Study”, *Medical Student Welfare*, 39(6): 594- 604

- Dusselier, L, Dunn, B., Wang, Y., Shelley, M.C. and Whalen, D.F. (2005). “Personal, health, academic and environmental predictors of stress for residence hall students”, *Journal of American College Health*, 54: 15-24
- Dwyer, A.L. and Cummings, A.L. (2001), “Stress, self efficacy, Social Support and coping strategies in university students”, *Canadian Journal of Counseling*, 35(3): 208-220
- Essel, G. and Owusu, P. (2017), “Causes of Students’ Stress, its effects on their stress management by students, A case study at Seinajoki”, University of Applied Science, Finland. An unpolished doctoral thesis.
- Fairbrother, K and Warn, J. (2003), “Workplace Dimensions, Stress and Job Satisfaction”, *Journal of Managerial Psychology*. 18 (i): 8-21
- Good, T.L., Brophy, J.E. (1986), “Educational Psychology”, 3rd Edition, New York: Longman Inc.
- Jogaratnam, G and Buchanan, P (2004), “Balancing the Demands of School and Work: Stress and Employed Hospitality Students”, *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 16 (4): 237-245
- Kadapatti, M.G., Vijaylaxmi, A.H.M. (2012), “Stressors of Academic Stress- A Study of Pre- University Students”, *Indian Journal of Science Resources*, 3(10): 171- 175
- Kaplan, H.I., and Sadock B.J. (2000), “Learning Theory, In: Synopsis of Psychiatry”: *Behavioral Sciences/ Clinical Psychiatry*, 8th Edition, 148- 15
- Krause, K.R., Hartley, R., Jamesand R., McInnes C. (2005). “The First Year Experience in Australian Universities: Findings from a Decade of National Studies. Department of Education, Science and Training”, Canberra, Australia. <http://www.griffith.edu.au/> Retrieved 07 May, 2014
- Kumar, S. and Jejurkar, K. (2005), “Study of Stress Level in Occupational Therapy Students during their Academic Curriculum”, *The Indian Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 37 (1), 5-14
- Malach-Pines A., Keinan G. (2007). “Stress and Burnout in Israel Police officers, during Palestinian Uprising(Intifada)”, *International Journal of Stress Management*, 14:160-174
- Masih P.P. and Gulrez, N.K. (2006). “Age and Gender Differences on Stress”. In Husain, A and Khan, M.I. (eds). “Recent Trends In Human Stress Management”, (97-104). New Delhi, India: Global Mission Publishing House.

- Mazumdar H., Gogoi D., Buragohainand L., Haloi N. (2012), “A Comparative Study on Stress and its Contributing Factors among the Graduate and Postgraduate Students”, *Advances in Applied Science Research*, 3(1): 399- 406
- Misra, R. and Mckean N., Russo Westand T. (2000), “Academic Stress of College Students: Comparison of Students and Faculty Perceptions”, *College Student Journal*, 34(2): 236-246
- Misra, R. and Castillo, L.G. (2004), “Academic Stress amongCollege Students: Comparision of American and International Students”, *International Journal of Stress Management*, 11(2): 132-148
- Niemi, P.M., Vainiomaki P.T. (1999), “Medical Students’ Academic Distress, Coping and Achievement Strategies during the Pre- Clinical Years”, *Teaching and Learning in Medicine*, 11(3):125- 134
- Omoniyi, M.B.I., Ogunsanmi J.O. (2012), “Stress among Academic Staff in South West Nigeria”, *The African Symposium*, 12(1): 126- 132
- Plant, E.A., Ericsson K.A., Hilland K. Asberg (2005), “Why Study Time Does Not Predict Grade Point Average Across College Students: Implications of Deliberate Practice for Academic Performance”, *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 30(1): 96- 116.
- Radcliffe, C. and Lester, H. (2003). “Perceived Stress during Undergraduate Medical Training: A Qualitative Study”, *Medical Education*, 37(32): 32-38.
- Rafidah, K., Azizah, A., Norzaid, M.D., Chong,S.C., Salwani, M.I., and Noraini, (2009). “The Impact of Perceived stress and stress Factors and Academic Performance of Pre-Diploma Science Students: A Malaysian Study”, *International journal of Scientific Research in Education*, 2(1):13-26.
- Robotham, D. (2008). “Stress among Higher Education Students: Towards a Research Agenda”, *Higher Education*, 56(6):735-746
- Saipanish, R. (2003). “Stress among Medical Students in a Thai Medical School”, *Medical Teacher*, 25(5):502-506.
- Sharma, B., Wavere, R., A Deshpande, A., Nigamand, R., Chandrokar, R. (2011). “A Study of Academic Stress and Its Effect on Vital Parameters in Final Year Medical Students at SAIMS Medical College, Indore, Madhya Pradesh”, *Biomedical Research*, 22 (3):361-365

- Sinha, U.K., Sharma V., and Nepal, M. K., (2001). “Development of a Scale for Assessing Academic Stress: A Preliminary Report”, *Journal of the Institute of Medicine*, 23:96-102.
- Siraj, H. H., Salam, A., Roslan, R., Hasan, N. A., Jinand T. H., Othman, M. N., (2014). “Stress and its Association with the Academic Performance of Undergraduate Fourth Year Medicinal Students at UniversitiKebangsaan Malaysia”, *The International Medical Journal Malaysia*, 13(1): 19-24
- Smith, A., Johal, S., Wadsworth E., Smith, G.D., and Peters, T. (2000). “The Scale of Occupational Stress: The Bristol Stress and Health at work study”. H.S.E., Books, Sudbury.
- Sohail, N. (2013). “Stress and Academic Performance among Medical Students”, *Journal of the College of physician and Surgeons*, 23(1): 67-71
- Sulaiman, T., Hassan, A., Sapian, V.M. and Abdullah, S.K. (2009). “The Level of Stress among Students in Urban and Rural Secondary Schools in Malaysia”. *European Journal of Social Sciences*, 10(2), 179-184
- Sataptan, S. and Kuppan A. (1980), “A Comparative Study of Adjustment Pattern of Postgraduates Arts and Science”, *Journal of Psychological Research*, 24, 59-61
- Talib, N. and Zia-ur-Rehman, M. (2012). “Academic Performance and perceived Stress among University Students”, *Educational Research and Review*, 7(5): 127-132.
- Taylor, M.F. and Owusi-Banahana, N.O., (2010). “Stress among Part-Time Bussiness Students. A Study in a Ghanaian University Campus”, *IFE Psychologia: An International Journal of psychology*, 18(1): 137-157.
- Thawabieh, A.M. and Qaisy, L.M., (2012). “Assessing Stress among University Students”, *American International Journal of Contemporary Research*, 2(2): 110-116
- Watson, R.L. (2002). “A Comparison of Perceived Stress Levels and Coping Styles of Junior and Senior Students in Nursing and Social Work programs”. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Marshall University, Huntington.
- Wilks, S.E. (2008). “Resilience amid Academic Stress: The Moderating Impact of Social Support among Social Work Students”. *Advances in Social Work*, 9 (2), 106-125.
- Wombie, L.P. (2005), “Impact of Stress Factors on College Students Academic Performance”, *Undergraduate Journal of Psychology*, 16(1): 16-23.

- Yusoff, M.S.B., Rahim, A.F.A., and Yaacob, M.J. (2010). “Prevalence and Sources of Stress among Universiti Sains Malaysia Medical Students”, *Malaysia Journal of Medical Sciences*, 17(1): 30-37
- Zajacova, A., Lynchand, S.M., Espenshade, T.J. (2005). “Self-Efficacy, Stress and Academic Success in College”, *Research in Higher Education*, 46(6), 677-706