

EFFECT OF STRESS ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AND PERSONAL LIFE OF UNDER-GRADUATE STUDENTS OF KASHMIR

Jan Jahanger ^{1*}, Ishfaq Hussain Bhat¹, Manzoor Ahmad Parray ²

^{*1} *Research scholar, School of Education, Devi Ahilya Vishwavidyalaya, Indore, Madhya Pradesh, India.*

² *Research scholar, University Institute of Education, Sant Baba Bagh Singh University, Khiala, Jalandhar, Punjab, India.*

*Corresponding Author: janedu24.25@gmail.com

* Mobile no. 7006366805

Abstract

Introduction:

The purpose of this study was to study the effect of stress on academic performance and personal life of under-graduate students of Tangmarg College of district Baramulla of the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Stress is a psychological and physiological response to events that upset our personal balance in some way. For many young adults, schools and college are the best time of life. These critical years can also be undermined by depression, anxiety, and stress. Students who do not cope well with stress have a very drastic effect on their studies and behavior. A sample of 60 students were asked to answer a questionnaire prepared online in google form. The results were presented graphically, inferentially, and descriptively. The objective of the current study was to assess the effect of stress among under-graduate students and its association with various academic performance and personal life related factors. Researcher made questionnaire was used for data collection mailed to the students in google form. Students studying in different streams had stress either in due to their personal reasons or due to academically. It affects them mentally, physically, and emotionally. Students face anxiety and go into depression which later leads to decreased performance in academics. Stress is the body's reaction to a challenge. This research can help us in finding the reason and the causes of stress thus helping the students in finding a solution to their problems and help them enjoy their college life stress-free and tension-free.

KEY WORDS: Under-graduate Students, Academic Performance, Personal Life, Stress

Introduction

Stress is a psychological and physiological response to events that upset our personal balance in some way. When faced with a threat, whether to our physical safety or emotional equilibrium, the body's defenses kick into high gear in a rapid, automatic process known as the "fight-or flight" response. We all know what this stress response feels like, heart pounding in the chest, muscles tensing up, breath coming faster and every sense on red alert. According to Wheeler (2007) stress is physics word which refers to the amount of force used on an object and it relates in real life as to how certain issues that carry force applied to human life. Stress is explained by Pargman (2006) as "An uncertain reaction to external and internal factors" that means a negative or positive reaction to environmental stimuli. Stress is a reality of

our everyday life. At the point when individuals search for help, they are regularly managing conditions, circumstances and stressors in their life that leave them feeling emotionally and physically troubled. Countless people feel that they have very little resources or assistances to deal with the high levels of stress they are experiencing. Circumstances that trigger stress are known as stressors.

According to Centre (2010) & Davidson (2001) Stress is not only negative things that happens positive things also cause stress. In our life we only know stress to be bad but that's not the cases. There are two types of stressors which is the positive stressors which is known as eustress and negative stressors which is also known as distress. There some positive situations that causes a person to be stressed up. Some examples of these circumstances are, promotion at work, starting a new job, getting married, and having a child which are few of the many. Positive stressors are usually not noticed because it has some characteristics. On the other hand, negative stressors happen to be the bad things or events which causes us to be stress and these type of stressors is easily noticed. Examples of negative stressor are, death of a loved one, unemployment, divorce and illness which are also few of many. There are also some characteristics of negative stressors that's makes it easily for them to be noticed. In the book of Brain Luke Seaward (2011) also mentions some other types of stress which are different in their own ways. There is another type of stress which is the neustress and "this is any kind of information or sensory stimulus that is perceived as unimportant".

Response of our body towards stress

The "fight-or-flight" stress response involves a flow of biological changes that prepare us for emergency action. When danger is sensed, a small part of the brain called the hypothalamus sets off a chemical alarm. Stress hormone races through the bloodstream, readying us to either flee the scene or battle it out. Heart rate and blood flow to the large muscles increase so we can run faster and fight harder. Blood vessels under the skin constrict to prevent blood loss in case of injury, pupils dilate so we can see better and our blood sugar rises up, giving us an energy boost and speeding up reaction time. At the same time, body processes not essential to immediate survival are suppressed. The digestive and reproductive systems slow down, growth hormones are switched off and the immune response is inhibited. The biological stress response is meant to protect and support us. It is what helped our ancestors survive the life-or-death situations they commonly faced. But in the modern world, most of the stress we feel is in response to psychological rather than physical threats. Whether we are stressed over a forthcoming deadline, an argument with a friend, or a mountain of bills, the warning bells ring and we go into automatic overdrive. If we have a lot of responsibilities and worries, we may be running on stress a good portion of the time-launching into emergency mode with every traffic jam, phone call from the in-laws or segment of the evening news. But the problem with the stress response is that the more it's activated, the harder it is to shut off. Instead of leveling off once the crisis has passed, your stress hormones, heart rate and blood pressure remain elevated. Furthermore, extended or repeated activation of the stress response takes a heavy toll on the body. Prolonged exposure to stress increases your risk of everything from heart disease, obesity and infection to anxiety, depression and memory problems. Because of the widespread damage it can cause, it is essential to learn how to deal with stress in a more positive way and reduce its impact on your daily life.

Signs and Symptoms of Stress

To get a handle on stress, you first need to learn how to recognize it in yourself. Stress affects the mind, body and behavior in many ways—all directly tied to the physiological changes of the fight-or-flight response. The specific signs and symptoms of stress vary widely from person to person. Some people primarily experience physical symptoms, such as low back pain, stomach problems, and skin outbreaks. In others, the stress pattern centers on emotional symptoms, such as crying or hypersensitivity. The following are some of the common warning signs and symptoms of stress.

Cognitive Symptoms

- Memory problems
- Indecisiveness
- Inability to concentrate
- Trouble thinking clearly
- Poor judgment
- Seeing only the negative
- Anxious or racing thoughts
- Constant worrying
- Loss of objectivity
- Fearful anticipation

Emotional Symptoms

- Moodiness
- Agitation
- Restlessness
- Short temper
- Irritability, impatience
- Inability to relax
- Feeling tense and “on edge”
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Sense of loneliness and isolation
- Depression or general unhappiness

Physical Symptoms

- Headaches or backaches
- Muscle tension and stiffness
- Diarrhea or constipation
- Nausea, dizziness
- Insomnia
- Chest pain, rapid heartbeat
- Weight gain or loss
- Skin breakouts (hives, eczema)
- Loss of sex drive
- Frequent colds

Behavioral Symptoms

- Eating more or less
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Isolating yourself from others
- Procrastination, neglecting responsibilities
- Using alcohol, cigarettes, or drugs to relax
- Nervous habits (e.g. nail biting, pacing)
- Teeth grinding or jaw clenching
- Overdoing activities (e.g. exercising, shopping)
- Overreacting to unexpected problems
- Picking fights with others

Keep in mind that the signs and symptoms of stress can also be caused by other psychological and medical problems. If you're experiencing any of the warning signs of stress, it's important to consult a doctor for a full evaluation. Your doctor can help you determine whether or not your symptoms are stress-related.

Personal factors as a source of stress

Personal factors happen to really cause so much stress than we can imagine and they also play a very important role in the various aspect of the life of a student. These factors vary from person to person that results in a different set of perceptions, attitudes and behaviours. Personal factors can take a form of so

many ways which one way or the other affect student performance and stress them up. Some of these factors are

I. Change in Living Environment

The reality that stress occurs when an event or stimulus requires us to change in some way makes a change in living environment a stressful experience. Apart from moving from home to college, our daily bumping into new faces on campus, disorders from roommates, etc. is tensed experience.

II. Change in Sleeping Habits

The somewhat burdensome nature of student-life causes a drastic change in sleep pattern. More to the point, this newly adopted pattern is unstable, as it is often tied to academic workloads and/or tasks at hand. Nowadays students are spending much more time on social media especially their sleeping nights which causes the stress. The use of social media is very addictive. Once you sign up, logging out becomes a problem. Many people have been addicted to social media, meaning they are always on their phones and computers liking, commenting and tweeting. It becomes impossible for such people to spend more than an hour without their phones. Now you can imagine a person who has been addicted to using a smartphone without access to it, he or she is actually stressed. The urge to be updated with new social media posts makes you feel like you aren't living in the present world. Social media addiction comes integrated with low quality sleep. The time you are supposed to be sleeping, you are checking the viral content on Instagram, Facebook or Twitter, which limits your sleeping hours. People addicted to social media often chat with their friends till late at night. Despite your sleeping time, you still have to wake up early to go to college or work. As you didn't have enough sleep the previous night, your day will likely be filled with anxiety. You'll likely find it hard to concentrate on your day-to-day activities, which could lower your productivity. If you're a student, your performance starts dropping and in the end you will be stressed by your poor grades.

III. New responsibilities

Responsibilities related to holding a job while in college will certainly compound to a heavy academic load which is bound to result in stress. This is really challenging, as one has to financially rely on a job for sustenance.

IV. Financial Difficulties

It is definitely not a conducive experience when a student has to handle dual challenges of academics and financial constraints. Life becomes very challenging when a student is behind on bills payment; for when deadlines are not met and bills stares at you, it is enough to get a student tensed and depressed.

V. Combining Job with studies

Many take part-time job or short term job during their period of studies. Some of them do this to gain experience for the future and also other to support their studies and themselves financially. Although working while in college is very beneficial to a student it also causes a lot of stress for them which might be too difficult to handle. Students will not have much time to study for their quizzes or exams and some even miss a lot of classes because they will be worn out or tired by the time they come back from their workplace. Students turn to face a lot of challenges when they combine work with studies

VI. *Health Problems*

Health issues are a concern to everyone because bad health causes a lot of damage to the life of a person. In the life of a student, health problems cause a lot of stress and these stress turn out to even make the conditions worst by adding insult to injury. Stress can lead to physical symptoms including headaches, upset stomach, elevated blood pressure, chest pain, and problems sleeping. Research suggests that stress also can bring on or worsen certain symptoms or diseases.

VII. *Poor Eating Habit*

Poor nutrition and unhealthy eating habits can increase a student's stress level, according to the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine. Diets that can build stress levels in understudies incorporate those that are high in fat, caffeine, sugar and refined starches. Examples of stress-inducing foods are sodas, energy drinks, doughnuts, candy bars, processed snack foods, white bread, and French fries. A healthy diet that helps to reduce stress includes foods that are low in fat and high in fiber and complex carbohydrates. Such foods include fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts and lean proteins.

Academic factors as a source of stress

There are some factors that happen in the academic curriculum that causes so much stress to students. So many things take place in the day to day activities of the academic processes that make students stress up.

I. *Increased class workload*

An increase in class workload stresses up students in the sense that when students have to do more than they can handle, they turn to get frustrated and are unable to focus and think straight. Students will overschedule their plans to meet up with the class workload in order to get good grades but eventually because these tasks are too much for them, they end up messing everything up. Especially in situations where there are a lot of assignments to do after having a very long day at college makes students more confused. Also Too much workload can also make student to be stressed in the sense that, when a student is undergoing so many courses in college and each of these courses are also demanding it make the student not have enough time to handle all these courses to his or her perfection and ones that happen the student turns to think so much and as a result will be stressed up and this will have a great effect on the academic performance of the student.

II. *Lower grade*

It is the desire of every student to excel in their field studies as such high grades mean a lot to students. In situations where students believe they expect a higher grade but at the end get a lower grade than they expected it weighs them down and kills the motivation they have. Once this happens students start to think a lot about what they did not do, where they went and most times are not able to find answers to those questions. At the long run, they become stressed up with that and are not able to do everything right again.

III. *Many hours of studies*

Every student has a life outside the academic curriculum and environment. When a student has to compromise and use their personal time for other activities for studies, they turn to get bored and lose interest in studies. At the long run, this situation stresses them up which causes them to lose focus on academic work. As the saying goes "all work and no play make Jack a dull boy ", it also applies to

students since they will become dull if all they do is to use their private time for studies and not have time for themselves.

IV. Language difficulties

Language proficiency may have a profound effect on an individual's ability to learn and develop, due to its key role in the transmission of information and regulation of cognitive processes (Binder & Smith 2013). Language is one factor that has so much influence on the life of a student. Language is the only means to communicate freely, so if students are having issues understanding the language been used in the academic process it becomes a big challenge to them and they will eventually start thinking about it. Once this happens they become frustrated and stressed up when even they have communicated and at the long run affects their performance.

V. Procrastination

Procrastination as an attitude is very common among a lot of students. Procrastination is the avoidance of doing a task which needs to be accomplished. It is the act of accomplishing more pleasurable things set up of less pleasurable ones or completing less critical errands rather than more pressing ones, in this manner putting off approaching assignments to a later time. When student keeps doing this they lose interest in doing that particular task or assignment and once the loss of interest sets in stress follows up since they will be thinking how to meet up with the deadline for the assignment or task.

VI. Examinations

Periods for examinations causes so much stress in students than one can imagine. Examination is the only means for a student to prove that he deserves a better grade for a course and due to these students think a lot and also revise everything they have learnt during the whole period of the course, in doing so, some students get confused about some topics they treated and others also do not know where to begin their studies from. The thought of these stuff makes them frustrated and confused which at the long run stress them up.

VII. Missing Lectures

It is the desire of students to miss lectures or skip college. Although some students wake up and decide to miss lectures or college, others also have to do that due to circumstances beyond their control. When some students miss class or lectures they become disturbed and worried especially of the course is on they have difficulties in understanding. When this happens they start to wonder how they will make up for the lessons they miss so as they will be on the same pace with their fellow colleague in college. The thought of finding ways to make up with lessons which they have issues in becomes a burden and stress them up beyond imagination.

VIII. Frustration due to misunderstandings

A lot of students get frustrated when they don't understand what is being taught by the teachers in class. Some also misinterpret what the teacher said in a different way or meaning. This frustration leads to students being stressed up because they wonder how they will pass the course because they hardly get what the teachers say in class.

IX. Computer related problems

We are in the era of technological world and as a result of that most aspect of the human life is adapting to changes to suit the environment to avoid difficulty, these changes do not only affect humans but also

institutions. The introduction of information technology and also computers have done a lot of good to colleges and students especially but on the other hand, has also created problems for certain students. Most students lack the skills of using the computer for academic purpose and unfortunately for most of the curriculum in our modern colleges makes so much use of the computer and this creates so many challenges and discomfort for the student which cause them to start thinking and become stressed up eventually.

Impact of stress academically

According to (Centre 2010) Stress affects students academically, socially, physically and emotionally. Stress affecting students academically leads them to have bad performance in college work. Students experience a lack of concentration. Stress in college students can affect the ability to concentrate, and there have been studies conducted that prove that stress interferes with a student's ability to concentrate, Stress in students is not something we can take lightly. Ironically stress Improves concentration for a short term because when students are little stressed up they then to focus to try to get the issue in question which stresses them away but these concentrations doesn't last for long since they will have more college work or others assignments to do which demand long-term concentrations rather than the short term.

Furthermore, stress affect the productivity or the output students make. When students are stressed up they turn not to give their maximum best when doing college work and as a result, it manifests in the outputs which are clearly seen in the grades. Stress makes students spend fewer hours trying to get some college work done and they also do it in a shabby manner not following the instructions giving the assignments in question. They also don't make adequate preparation for examinations. In the long term, it can even affect their plans for the future. Also, stress affects the initiative skills of students. Most students when stressed upturn to lack the ability to bring up new ideas to solve problems or issues, thus when students are faced with some challenges which might be even so easy to solve because they are stressed up to refuse or are unable to rack their brains to find solutions to that problem.

Lastly, stress cause students to be confused and also suffer from amnesia. All people when stressed upturn to be sixes and sevens with the little- complicated issues. In the academic life of students, they easily have misunderstandings with what is been taught in college and don't know what to do. On the other hand, many of them also forget easily what have they know or have been taught because their minds are burdened with the issues that are stressing them up. All these points impact of stress on students, in the long run, cause them to perform poorly in college.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This survey was taken among college students studying in different streams in different institutions globally. The study population involved 80 students studying in different streams and in different specialties. A maximum of 15 questions were prepared and administered to the participants through the survey Planet link. The questions asked included the main reason for their stress and the all factors played a role in stress, how does the stress affect academically and how do you deal with stress. The survey questions were prepared and answered online.

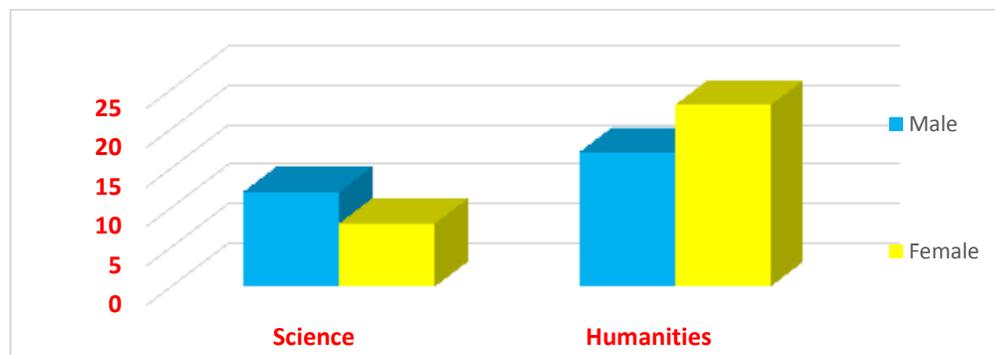
RESULTS

The data collected from the survey was statistically analyzed and well tabulated for interpretation.

DISCUSSION

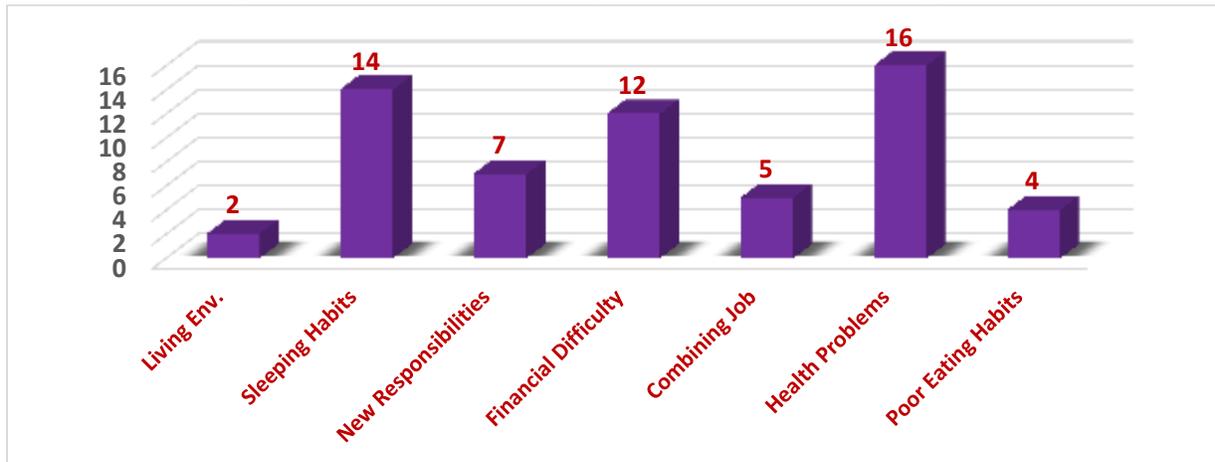
Homeostasis is a central concept to the idea of stress. Most biochemical processes strive to maintain equilibrium, a steady state that exists more as an ideal and less as an achievable condition. Stress is known to be the fuel that the body uses to meet the daily challenges of our fast-paced modern life; for others, it is the aversive by-product of such a life. Stress is associated with the major life events, daily hassles, and changes in life. Stress is created by excessive environmental factors and internal demands that need constant effort and adjustment. High levels of stress can cause major effects academic performance and mental health of the students. Academic stress can be conceptual as a student's interactions between environmental stressors, the students cognitive appraisal of and coping with the academic-related stressor and physiological or psychological response to the stressor. Learning and memory can also be affected by stress though an optimal level of stress can enhance learning ability, too much stress can cause physical and mental health problems, reduces self-esteem and may affect the academic achievements of students.

According the survey conducted, the majority of the students were humanities stream students.



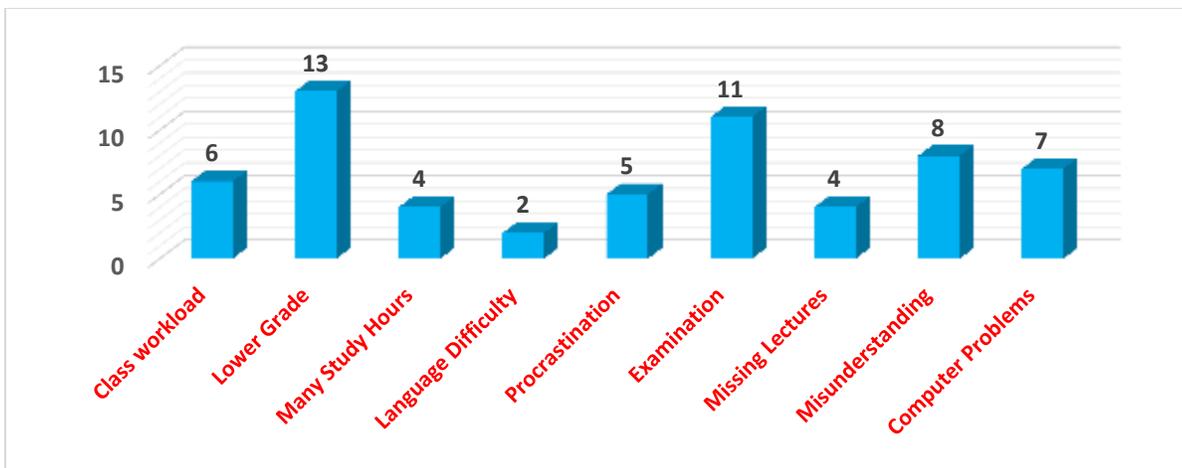
Around 67% students were from humanities stream with 42.5% student's male and 57.5% females while as 33% students were from science stream with 60% students male and 40% students as female. Excessive stress among students was found to reduce the effectiveness of their study which leads to bad habits and results in negative long-term consequences, including absenteeism, poor academic performance and college dropout.

Graph 2.
Percentage of Personal Factors Responsible for Stress among UG Students



Graph 2 shows the major factors that causes stress in students in their personal level. The data was collected from a sample of 60 under-graduate students. Personally, the major factor for stress was health problems which includes 26.67% of the students which were stressed academically due to health problems. Nearly 23.34% of the students were worried due to changing sleeping habits and around 20% of the students were facing financial problems followed by 11.67% due to new responsibilities, 8.33% due to combining job with study that is earning while learning, 6.66% due to poor eating habits and lastly 3.33% due to changing living environment. Personal factors responsible for stress involves mental distress regarding life living challenges or failure or even an awareness of the possibility of social life failure.

Graph 3.
Percentage of Academic Factors Responsible for Stress among UG Students



Graph 3 shows the major factors that causes stress in students in their academic level. The data was collected from a sample of 60 under-graduate students. Academically, the major for stress was grades include 21.67% of the students were stressed academically due to grades. Nearly 18.34% of the students were worried due to failure in examination and around 13.34% of the students were frustrated due to

misunderstandings followed by 11.66% due to lack of computer knowledge, 10% due to heavy workload, 8.33% due to procrastination, 6.66% due to many study hours & missing lectures and lastly 3.33% due to language difficulty. Academic stress involves mental distress regarding academic challenges or failure or even an awareness of the possibility of academic failure.

CONCLUSION

Stress is the body's reaction to a challenge. Although stress is often perceived as bad, it can actually be good in some respects. The right kind of stress can sharpen the mind and reflexes. Stress is the body's natural response to challenges. When a student experiences high levels of stress or chronic stress, regardless of her age or grade, it can interfere with her ability to learn, memorize, and earn good grades - as well as lead to poor physical, emotional, and mental health. By learning about common stressors, a parent can help to mitigate negative or chronic stress in a child's life. Excessive stress could lead to psychological problems such as depression and anxiety. This this research could help us in finding the main reason and helping the students in finding a solution to their problems and help them enjoy their schooling stress-free and tension-free.

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