Stress among Students: A Comparison between Undergraduate and Postgraduate Students

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ABSTRACT

Stress is normal and it can help a student keep track of his tasks but it only becomes a deterrent to good life when it gets in the way of living a healthy lifestyle. Youngsters today are experiencing high levels of stress. The sources of stress are diverse for youngsters in different age levels. Among 13-17 year old, academics is by far most commonly mentioned source. Among 18-24 old, it is jobs and financial matters. Academic and career related pressures are ruining the life of young people. An average teenager today wants excel in school, perform well in sports, keep up with the latest trends and choose the right higher education stream. Youngsters in their 20’s want a well paid job, they want saving for buying assets and also want to choose the right life partner. Added to this is the pressure to try and meet the expectations of the parents. This study attempted to find the level of stress among the post and under graduate students, which group of student face more stress. It was found that undergraduate students have higher level of stress as compared to post graduate students.

Keywords: Stress level, Students stress level, Academic stresses

INTRODUCTION

Stress has become a major concern of modern times as it can cause harm to ‘persons’ health and performance. In simple words, stress refers to pressures or tensions people feel as living human makes constant demands, so it produced pressure that is stress. Stress is therefore, a natural and unavoidable feature of human life (chhabra, 2001). Stress is your body's way of responding to any kind of demand. It can be caused by both good and bad experiences. When people feel stressed by something going on around them, their bodies react by releasing chemicals into the blood. Stress is simply defined as "a factor that creates a mental, emotional, or physical strain." It is "a state of unresolved tension arising from the pressures, irritations, and demands of life.

Selyes defined stress as “the non-specific response of the body to any demand made upon it”. R.S. Schuler viewed stress as a dynamic condition in which an individual is confronted with opportunity, constraint or demand related to what he desires and for which the outcomes is perceived to be both uncertain and important. Stress is a normal physical response to events that make you feel threatened or upset your balance in some way. When you sense danger – whether it’s real or imagined – the body's defenses kick into high gear .The stress response is the body's way of protecting you. When working properly, it helps you stay focused, energetic, and alert. In emergency situations, stress can save your life – giving you extra strength to defend yourself. The stress response also helps you rise to meet challenges. Stress is what keeps you on your toes during a presentation at work, sharpens your concentration when you’re attempting the game-winning free throw, or drives you to study for an exam when you’d rather be watching TV. But beyond a certain point, stress stops being helpful and starts causing major damage to your health, your mood, your productivity, your relationships, and your quality of life. The situations and pressures that cause stress are known as stressors. We usually think of stressors as being negative, such as an exhausting work schedule or a rocky relationship. However, anything that puts high demands on you or forces you to adjust can be stressful. This includes positive events such as getting married, buying a house, going to college, or receiving a promotion. What
causes stress depends, at least in part, on your perception of it. Something that's stressful to you may not faze someone else; they may even enjoy it.

Causes of stress

Many different things can cause stress -- from physical (such as fear of something dangerous) to emotional (such as worry over your family or job.) Identifying what may be causing you stress is often the first step in learning how to better deal with your stress.

Common external causes of stress

Not all stress is caused by external factors. Stress can also be self-generated:

- Major life changes
- Work
- Relationship difficulties
- Financial problems
- Being too busy
- Children and family

Common internal causes of stress

Not all stress is caused by external factors. Stress can also be self-generated:

- Inability to accept uncertainty
- Pessimism
- Negative self-talk
- Unrealistic expectations
- Perfectionism
- Lack of assertiveness

STRESS IN STUDENTS

Stress can be cause in anyones’ life regardless of age. It is commonly known that students can be very stressful. We have to accept this fact and think of it as a preparation of future life when student will start with a group up life full of responsibilities and everyday stressful situations. Stress is both a necessary and an unnecessary part of every student’s life. After all, students life is all about papers, assignments, quizzes and major examinations. The never–ending information overload would overwhelm just anyone. Stress is normal and it can help a student keep track of his tasks but it only becomes a deterrent to good life when it gets in the way of living a healthy lifestyle. Youngsters today are experiencing high levels of stress. The sources of stress are diverse for youngsters in different age levels. Among 13-17 year old, academics is by far most commonly mentioned source. Among 18-24 old, it is jobs and financial matters. Academic and career related pressures are ruining the life of young people. An average
teenager today wants excel in school, perform well in sports, keep up with the latest trends and choose the right higher education stream. Youngsters in their 20’s want a well paid job, they want saving for buying assets and also want to choose the right life partner. Added to this is the pressure to try and meet the expectations of the parents. The most common symptoms of students stress are:

- Irritability
- Bloodshot eyes
- Unkempt hair
- Depression
- Hostility(in severe cases)
- Confusion
- Disorganization
- Forgetfulness
- Poor judgment
- Anxiety
- Loss of concentration
- And negative self-talk

This study aims to find the level of stress among the post and under graduate students , which group of student face more stress.

**METHODOLOGY**

The value of any systematic research lies in it methodology which is a way to a systematically solve research problems .Methodology helps the investigator to conduct in a prescribed manner

**Objective of the study:**

To find out the level of stress among the post and under graduate students.

**Hypothesis:**

Undergraduate Students are more stressed than Postgraduate students

**Methods of data collection:** For the purpose of the study the necessary data has been collected using primary method. Likert’s five point rating scale has been used having the following five options (A) Not at all (B) rarely (C) sometimes (D)often (E)very often.

**Result and Analysis**

First level of stress among under graduate students and post graduate students was calculated.

Mean of under graduate students was higher than post graduate students. $T - test$ was calculated and it was found that that the mean of scores collected from under graduate students is high that is 33.4 as compare to post graduate students that is 25 , which clearly shows that under graduate students have high level of stress as compared to post graduate students. This result is significant because the calculated t value (3.79)n is greater than the table value.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of student</th>
<th>Good control over stress</th>
<th>Low level of stress</th>
<th>Medium level of stress</th>
<th>High level of stress</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate (40)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post graduate (40)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interpretation**

From the findings, the results clearly revealed that students are stressed, but undergraduate students are more stressed as compared to postgraduate students. This may be because they are younger and less attuned and adjusted with the environment as compared to senior students. A study done by Joseph E. Agolla and Henry Ongori (Department of Management, Faculty of Business, University of Botswana, Gaborone Botswana, Department of Management, Faculty of Business, University of Botswana, Gaborone, Botswana) found out the major causes of stress among students are academic workload, inadequate resources, low motivation, and poor performance in academic work, continuous performance in academic work, overcrowded lecture halls, and uncertainty of getting jobs after graduation. Students are the future leaders of tomorrow and anything that interferes with their wellbeing should be termed as denying the society their future leaders. These outcomes can be divided into physical violence and psychological abuse among the students (Johns and Menzel, 1999). Psychological pressure to perform well in tests, examinations, expectations from peers, friends, family members, and attending lectures were among the common sources of students' stress while at the campus. So students need to cope up with stress very effectively by adopting good health habits, they need to look things differently, update their skills, and try more stress management strategies and if they find that situation is out of control then they should seek some counseling. Stress in academic institutions can have both positive and negative consequences if not well managed (Smith, 2002; Tweede et al., 2004; Stevenson and Harper, 2006). Academic institutions have different work settings compared to nonacademic and therefore one would expect the difference in symptoms, causes, and consequences of stress.

It is important for the university to maintain a well-balanced academic environment conducive for better learning, with the focus on the students' personal needs. Students' expectations vary with respect to personality and their backgrounds which influences on how one perceives the environment around him/her. Academic stress among students has long been researched on, and researchers have identified stressors as too many assignments, competition with other students, failures, lack of pocket money (Fairbrother and Warn, 2003), poor relationships with other students or lecturers, family or problems at home. Institutional (university) level stressors are overcrowded lecture halls, (Ongori, 2007; Awino and Agolla, 2008), semester system, and inadequate resources to perform academic work.

**Conclusion:**

Stress has become an important topic in academic circles as well as in our society. It should be assessed and attempts must be made to create an amicable environment to reduce stress. Counsellors must be appointed to listen to students' problems and solve them.
REFERENCES


