

A Study on Academic Stress among the students of Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

Academic stress is a main source of stress for many students. The study examined the level of academic stress among higher education level students. In this cross-sectional research, the researcher wanted to observe low, moderate, and severe stress level of the students at higher education (i.e., UG&PG level) in Kolkata district and its surrounding locality with the help of self-made questionnaire as a data collection tool. The major objectives of the study to find out the nature of stress among students at higher education level based on caste, no. of siblings and academic Marks. The total population of the research was the entire students of higher education level in Kolkata district of west Bengal where the sample consisted of 120 students. The study yielded that caste, no. of siblings and Academic Marks has no significant role on variation of academic stress.

1. Introduction

In life it is quite common to hear about death and taxes in first and second position, and stress comes in the third position of humans 'problems (Bernstein, Penner, & Stewart, 2008). Stress is part of life no matter how wealthy, powerful, attractive, or happy people might be. However, stress may take different forms depending on the situation. Stress may occur when one is doing a difficult exam, an automobile accident, waiting in a long line, during a day on which everything goes wrong. However, stress is perceived in different ways and may mean different thing to different individuals. It is perceived as events or situations that cause individuals to feel tension, pressure, or negative emotions including anxiety and anger. Moreover, other people define stress as the response to existing situations, which includes physiological changes (increased heart rate, and muscle tension), emotional and behavioural changes (Bernstein, et al 2008). Stress is always regarded as a psychological process that involves an individual's personal interpretation and response to any threatening event.

Academic stress defined as a mental distress with respect to some anticipated frustration associated with academic failure or even unawareness to the possibility of such failure. Students must face many academic demands, such as- school examination and tests, answering the questions in the class, showing progress in school subject. Understanding what a teacher is teaching, competing with other classmates, fulfilling teachers and parents' academic expectations. (Archer, 1985) defined academic stress as a stress arising from important factors like writing term papers, text anxiety, poor study skills, excessive academic load, and classroom environment, which in the turn forms a major part of general stress in adolescent students. According to (Gupta, 1987), academic stress essentially relates to mental distress associated with some anticipated frustration on account of academic failure or even a realization of the possibility of such a failure. (Fireman, 1992) defined academic stress is anything that imposes an extra demand on a person's ability to cope, often with something that a new and different in academic. (Bisht, 1989) stated that academic stress reflects perception of

students' academic frustration, academic conflict, academic pressure, and academic anxiety. Academic stress is an important factor accounting for variation in academic achievement. Academic stress is conceptualized as interaction between students' environment, stressors, cognitive appraisal and coping with physiological and psychological response to stress and stressors related to academics. This study purported to find out the prevalence status of academic stress among the students at higher education institutions in Kolkata, West Bengal, India.

2. Literature Review

A significant but weak negative relationship between undergraduate students' stress level and their academic achievement (Habiba Elias*, Wong Siew Ping, Maria Chong Abdullah 2011) was supported by the result that daily academic hassles were found to be the most stressful ($M = 3.11$; $SD = 0.96$) while personal problems were reported as the least stressful ($M = 2.27$; $SD = 0.86$), and first year students experienced greater academic stress from financial hardships ($\chi^2 = 10.71$; $p = .03$), academic overload/time ($\chi^2 = 10.23$; $p = .04$) and social expectations ($\chi^2 = 10.79$; $p = .01$) than the continuing students, (Gladys Nakalema and Joseph Ssenyonga 2013) Again the result that Correlational analysis revealed that there was a significant relationship between academic stress, self-regulation, and mindfulness (Seyed Abolghasem Mehrinezhad and Atefeh Ahmadi 2017) was supported by the result that there were positive correlation between religiosity sources and academic stress ($r = .300^{**}$, $p = .00$), 4) lastly, there were no significant differences in academic stress among students with different, level of study and specializations (Marwan Zaid Bataineh 2013) A researcher conducted a study, entitled "Academic Stress: A Case of the Undergraduate students" to examine the perceptions of major of sources of academic stress among male and female undergraduates. In the study, the researcher found that 1. The academic sources of stress appeared to be the most stressful for all the students due to the pressure originated from the course overloads, and the academic evaluation procedures, 2.

A variety of personal, familial, and social factors were also identified as least stressful stressors, 3. The first-year undergraduates, especially female students reported higher degree of stress than male students did (Wycliffe Yumba 2008). Also, Sandesh Dhakal (2013) studied on "An Assessment of Academic Stress among Students of bachelor's Level" to examine stress on a student's academic performance which can be both positive and negative depending on its severity (minimal level of stress can lead to positive outcomes such as motivation and improved task performance while severe stress can result in anxiety, depression, social dysfunction, and even suicidal intention).

3. Research question

After going through several contemporary studies on Academic stress among higher education level students, the researcher wants to find out wide knowledge gaps in this particular area. Keeping in mind the different dimensions of depression and their importance to disabled students, the following research question emerged in researcher's mind-

- A. What is the existing status of Academic stress among the students at higher education in West Bengal?

4. Problem statement

Considering the review of related literature occurred on the Academic Stress at the higher education level, the researcher becomes unable to locate any significant study made on the mental health- stress at higher education level i.e., there is still a knowledge gap on the selected problem. Hence, the researchers identify the problem stating, "A Study on Academic Stress among the students of Higher Education".

5. Delimitations

For the short period of time it was not possible to look after all aspects of problem therefore the study was delimited in following ground-

1. The present study is delimited to 120 samples only,
2. The samples are collected from Jadavpur University, who are studying in U.G, and P.G,
3. The variables of the study are delimited to independent variables like- Caste, no. of siblings and previous year's academic mark,
4. Only Chi-square test has been used as an inferential statistic.

6. Objectives

In view of the above research question and delimitation of the study, the researcher identifies the following objectives.

- 1) To find out the rate of prevalence of academic stress of higher education level students.
- 2) To find out the relationship of academic stress at the higher education level with respect to their Caste, no. of siblings and previous year's academic marks.

7. Hypotheses

In view of the basic research question and objectives of the study the following null hypotheses were formulated-

H₀₁ Academic stress level do not significantly differ among students when Caste is concerned.

H₀₂ Academic stress level do not significantly differ among students when no of siblings is concerned.

H₀₃ Academic stress level do not significantly differ among students when previous year's academic marks is concerned.

8. Study design

A cross- sectional survey method was adopted for the study and samples were randomly drawn from higher education institution in Kolkata.

Population- Entire undergraduate, post graduate students studying in higher education institution in Kolkata district of west Bengal.

Sample- 130 students who are regularly attend in college and university are considered as the sample of the study.

Variables- In the present study the following variables are identified and used.

Dependent variable – Academic stress

Independent variables – Caste, number of siblings and previous year's academic marks of students were considered to be independent variables.

9. Analysis and interpretation

Descriptive statistics and graphical presentation were used for the assessment of the stress among the higher education level students. Non-parametric inferential statistics, viz. Chi-square test was used for predicting the stress among the higher education level students under three independent variables.

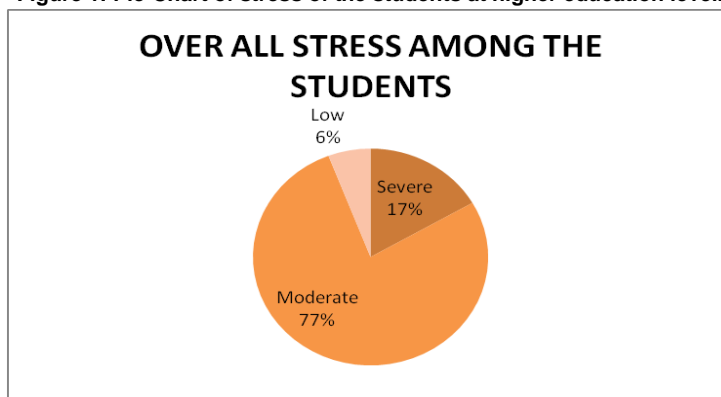
Table 1: Percentage of stress of the students at higher education level.

OVER ALL STRESS			TOTAL
ACADEMIC STRESS LEVEL OF THE STUDENTS	LOW	Total Number	7
		% OF TOTAL	5.83%
	MODERATE	Total Number	93
		% OF TOTAL	77.5%
	SEVERE	Total Number	20
		% OF TOTAL	16.67%
Total	Total Number	120	
	% OF TOTAL	100%	

Out of the total students (N=120), 20 (16.67%) students scored to such an extent that they are regarded as Severely Stressed. These students need intervention. Among the students, 93 (77.5%) students belonged to the Moderate level

Stress. Another 7 (5.83%) students found having Low level Stress. That means rest of the students instead of the Severely Stressed, are termed as normal students. The illustration is given in the figure 1.

Figure 1: Pie-Chart of stress of the students at higher education level.



Hypothesis testing

H₀₁ Academic stress level do not significantly differ among students when Caste is concerned.

Table 2

VARIABLE	Category	N	Df	X ²	Level of Significance	Remarks
Caste	General	38	8	8.856	.355	NS* P>0.01
	SC	51				
	ST	6				
	OBC-A	12				
	OBC-B	13				

The analysis in the above table revealed that the value of X² = 8.856 and P=0.355. The critical values X² at 0.05 and 0.01 levels of significance with 8 df = 15.507 and 20.090, respectively. It has been observed that the calculated value of X² is quite lower than the critical values of X² at 0.05 and 0.01 levels. So, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected at 0.05 level. Hence it can safely be concluded that the found difference in

the prevalent rate of Stress among the different caste category students at Higher Education level is not significant and it can be attributed to any chance factors.

H₀₂ Academic stress level do not significantly differ among students when no. of siblings is concerned.

Table 3

VARIABLE	Category	N	Df	X ²	Level of Significance	Remarks
No. Of Siblings	No Siblings	23	4	.706	.951	NS* P>0.01
	One Sibling	55				
	More than One Sibling	42				

The analysis in the above table revealed that the value of X² = 0.706 and P=0.951. The critical values X² at 0.05 and 0.01 levels of significance with 4 df = 9.488 and 13.277, respectively. It has been observed that the calculated value of X² is quite lower than the critical values of X² at 0.05 and 0.01 levels. So, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected at 0.05 level. Hence it can safely be concluded that the found difference in

the prevalent rate of Stress among the different no. of siblings of students at Higher Education level is not significant and it can be attributed to any chance factors.

H₀₃ Academic stress do not significantly differ among students when previous year's academic marks is concerned.

Table 4

VARIABLE	Category	N	Df	X ²	Level of Significance	Remarks
Academic Marks	Below 60%	9	2	.911	.634	NS* P>0.01
	Above 60%	111				

The analysis in the above table revealed that the value of $X^2 = 0.911$ and $P=0.634$. The critical values X^2 at 0.05 and 0.01 levels of significance with 2 df = 5.991 and 9.210, respectively. It has been observed that the calculated value of X^2 is quite lower than the critical values of X^2 at 0.05 and 0.01 levels. So, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected at 0.05 level. Hence it can safely be concluded that the found difference in the prevalent rate of Stress among the different Academic marks of students at Higher Education level is not significant and it can be attributed to any chance factors.

10. Major findings

The major findings emerged through the present study would be important contributions for improvement of our understanding about Academic Stress among the Higher Education level Students with respect to their demographic variables viz.- caste, no. of siblings and marks on previous examination.

Out of the total 120 Higher Education level Students, the overall rate of prevalence of Academic Stress was found-

- 20 (16.52%) students have severe level stress.
- 93 (76.85%) students have moderate level stress.
- 8 (6.61%) students have low level stress.
- The level of stress found to be higher in schedule caste students than other caste students which also was not statistically significant.
- The level of stress found to be higher in one sibling than other siblings which also was not statistically significant.
- The level of stress found to be higher in above 60% academic marks than other academic marks. Also, the found differences were not statistically significant.

That means it can be concluded that cumulatively the rate of prevalence of Academic Stress among the Higher Education level students i.e., 93.37% was found to be ranged from moderate to severe level stress.

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11. Discussion and conclusion

The findings emerged through the study helps us to improve our understanding about stress among higher education students. In the present study out of total number of students, 77.5% students were fall under the moderate level of stress and 16.67% students were fall under severe level of stress, respectively. So, it has been seen that near about 94.17% students have suffered mental health problem specially stress in higher education.

Table No.1 showed that out of total 120 students most of the students fall under the moderate level of stress i.e., 93 students fall under the moderate stress level where 20 students fall under the severe level of stress and 7 students fall under the low level of stress. Many researchers had got similarities with this result in other circumstances (Habiba Elias*, Wong Siew Ping, Maria Chong Abdullah, 2011). Table 2, 3 and 4 showed that the variables i.e., caste, no. of siblings and previous year's academic marksof study have no significant variation on stress of students at higher education level those may be attribute to any other chance factors.

Students are the wealth and future of a nation. It is clear from the findings that schedule caste students have more academic stress than other caste students. Their academic problem must be discussed by the teacher as well as parents. And they must be guided properly to choose a specific stream, not forced by parents. Parents should have expectations by their children according their capability. This study recommended that the teacher should arrange the necessary healthy environment to reduce the students' academic stress. The teachers should focus on reducing the students' academic stress by providing mentors classes, time scheduling activities, changing teaching method, and providing extracurricular activities.