

# A study on stress and its influencing factors on business school students during their academic curriculum

\* M. Meenakshisundaram \*\* Dr. P.T. Saleendran \*\*\* Dr. N. Panachanathan

## ABSTRACT

*It is usually observed that Business School students undergo tremendous stress during their academics. There is a high rate of psychological induced physiological illness among them which lead to poor academic performance and frequent absenteeism. The purpose of this study is to identify the level of stress and the factors that influenced to the stress among Business school students. The factors that are considered in the present study are Academic Factors, Physical factors Social factors and Emotional factors. The study instrument is a 28 items questionnaire. 100 management students participated in this study. Method used in this study is surveying method and the sampling has been done by simple random sampling. The reliability of the instrument is 0.8301. The data is analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) for Windows. Descriptive statistic in terms of mean and frequency is used to analyze the level of stress. The inference statistic- Pearson correlation, t- test and ANNOVA are used to test the hypothesis. Results showed that the level of stress among Business school's students were relatively high. Male students experienced greater stress than females. Stress was not found to differ significantly on the basis of stay at hostel, model of travel, time spent in travel every day, medium of study in school,. The most dominant stress' factor was work load and strictness in discipline.*

---

\* Lecturer- MBA, GRG School of Management Studies, PSGR Krishnammal College for women, Coimbatore.

\*\* Professor in Management sciences, D.J. Academy for Managerial Excellence, Coimbatore.

\*\*\* Professor and Head, Department of Business Administration, Annamalai University, Annamalai Nagar.

## Introduction

Stress is not something strange to our daily life nowadays. Everybody may feel stress when they are facing bad situation. Generally, word of stress has been used in social science research since a well known medical expert; Selye pioneered the research for psychological stress in 1950's. Cohen (2001) stated that stress is a perception phenomenon which exists from a comparison between the command given and ability of a person to execute the task successfully. Unbalanced situation in this mechanism will lead into stress experience and ultimately into stress reaction.

Student life faces several ups and downs. The peer pressure, demand of the teachers and parents for the good grades, and competitive environment in the schools leads to stressful life for the students. This stressful life leads to depression, anxiety and in severe cases suicide and suicidal attempts among students. College and school related stress is more prevalent, untreated cause academic failure.

Normally, high level of stress will lead into work unsatisfactory, work absentee, and works abandon. Stress adapting reactions of a student includes psychological reactions (anxiety and sadness), physiological (headache, high blood pressure) and attitude related (alcohol and smoking addiction, lifestyle and insomnia). Bad working environment will lead into stress factor

and causing work unsatisfactory. Ultimately, a student will have desire to discontinue his course (Seldin 2001).

Macan, T. Shahani, (2000) studied perceived stressors & coping strategies of health sciences students. A questionnaire was used to survey 1095 students about perceived stress & coping strategies. The results suggested that at least 86% of the subjects reported their top stressor to be examinations, amount of class work, lack of free time, long hours of study, & grades. 62% of subjects said that the stress they experienced strengthened their commitment to their professional education.

## Research objective

The purpose of this study was to examine the stress level of management students on certain stress dimensions.

## Methodology

### Samples for the study

The samples for the study included 100 management students of first and second year from various colleges in Coimbatore. There were 64 males and 36 female participants.

### Tools for Data Collection

Data is collected through questionnaires which are of two parts. In the first part, it is of demographic

form developed by researchers. In the second part is "Stress Scale" by the developed by the researcher. The sub-tests measure common stressors like Academic Stress, Physical stress, Social stress or and Emotional stress. The detail description is as follows.

1. **Personal data** : This section included the individual's personal information regarding gender, stay in hostel, mode of travel to college, time spent in travel everyday and medium of school education.
2. **Stress inducing factor**: This is a 28 item questionnaire divided into four groups of factors including: a) Academic factor: academic achievements, examination & competition amongst students. b) Physical factors: hostel & canteen facilities, environmental situations, noise in classroom & library etc. c) Social factors: social aspects in the college, parental influence & socio-economic support. d) Emotional factors: emotional comfort of student & other associated factors such as love affairs, jealousy & fights etc.

There are 7 questions in each group. The scale used for grading was 1 - No stress, 2 - Moderate stress, 3- Considerable stress and 4-High stress. A total score was obtained by summing up of scores for each group of factors.

3. Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support was used in the present study. It assessed perceptions from three specific sources: Family, friends and significant other.

## **Procedures**

Students were contacted in their respective classes and after assuring confidentiality the questionnaire was distributed. They were asked to respond to the questionnaire honestly and individually to the items on a four-point Likert scale.

## **Data Analysis**

The questionnaires were collected by the authors on the same day and were put into statistical analysis using SPSS 13 statistical software. Descriptive and inferential statistics were computed using the software.

## **Results**

Regarding Gender distribution of the study population, 64 percent were males and 36 percent females. Age of the study population ranged from twenty to twenty-six years. 32 percent of the population was hostlers and rest 68 percent Non Hostlers. Mostly all hostlers (41 percent) walk to the college and 32 percent of the samples use public or college bus and rest 27 percent use their own vehicle as the means of transport to the college. Out of the 100 respondents just 11 had regional medium as school education and rest 89 percent had English as the medium of instruction in their school level.

Most of management students in the study sample (79/100 -79%) perceived stress. There was no difference in the perceived stress on the basis of sex of the management students. (M 51/64, F 28/36, Chi-square,  $p=NS$ ). Females students show less academic stress when compared to Male students (ANOVA  $p < 0.05$ ) and Males students show less emotional stress when compared to female students (ANOVA  $p < 0.05$ )

There was no difference in the perceived stress on the basis of Place of stay (Hostel or Non- Hostel). (Hostel 22/32, Non -hostel 57/68, Chi-square,  $p=NS$ ). However, the Non- Hostel students perceive more academic stress when compared to students who stay in Hostel (Chi-square,  $p<0.05$ )

There is a significant difference in the perceived stress on the basis of Mode of travel to college a (Walk 27/41; Public transport/ College Bus 30/32; Own vehicle 22/27, Chi square-  $p < 0.01$ ) The students who stay in Hostel and walk to college perceive less stress than other students. Time spent in travel -  $< 1hr$ - 56/80,  $1-2 hr$ - 55/74, more than 2 hrs- 64/84, ANOVA  $p = NS$ )

a) Academic factors were greater perceived than all other factors as cause of stress. Physical and Social factors were greater perceived than emotional factors as cause of stress (Dominant stressor – Academic 41, Physical 21, Emotional 10, and Social 28)

b) There was no difference in the perceived stress and different levels of education by the first and second year students on the basis of their individual dominant stressor (ANOVA,  $p= NS$ ) except Emotional stress (ANOVA  $p < 0.04$ ).

## Discussion

This study confirmed the general impressions that there is considerable amount of stress in Management students. This is similar to other studies elsewhere which have reported such finding (Neemann, and Harter 1996). However the incidence of 73 in this series is much higher than that reported by other.

There was no difference in the stress on the basis of gender, stay in hostel, stressors, mode of travel and time spent in travel every day, is more important than other factors inducing stress in management students.

Academic factors were greater perceived causes of stress in Management. This was similar to the findings reported by others (Austin 1997). There was no difference in stress on the basis of dominant stressor of an individual indicating that the stress is not stressor specific.

There was no difference in the students at different levels of education and Academic factors, Social factors and Physical stress inducing factors. However, Emotional factors were found to be

significantly more in First year students as compared to second year students. This may be due to entry into a large professional college which makes students feel insecure in the initial period (Loeb 1992).

Stress is not found to be significantly more in students having their personality factor contributing to stress (Type A) as compared to others (Type B) (Powell 1997). This indicates that the stress in management students is due to the process and not due to personality traits of the students,

Regarding the relationship of gender and stress, females reported higher stress in certain aspects of the educational process like Academic and Emotional stressors, contrary to other findings that did not support any gender difference (Stake 1989) or showed that males experienced greater stress (Chickering, 2003). The following factors have been previously found to evoke greater stress among female students and were supported by this survey: lack of confidence to be a successful student and to become a successful dentist, fear of failure, examinations, and grades. Female students also seemed more concerned about financial responsibilities.

Previous investigators have reported conflicting findings about the relationship of student gender and financial concerns. Musser and Lloyd (2004)

reported a gender difference for financial concern, but Makosky (2001) reported no such difference. The fact that female students report significantly higher emotional distress can be attributed to additional strains they may face in the college environment or their different patterns of response to stressful events Maio-Esteves (1990). It has also been suggested that females receive less peer support than male students Neemann (1996). Waterman (2001) however, suggested that gender differences in most of the perceived stressors could be explained by their differing patterns of psychological morbidity and because males are simply less expressive of their concerns.

## **Conclusion**

Study concluded that stress in management students is common and is process oriented. Academic factors are greater perceived cause of stress in management students. Feelings of apprehension and fear may hinder optimal learning and adversely influence the level of performance Emotional factors are found to be significantly more in First year students. Female students perceive more academic stress and emotional stress. However stress is not stressor or trait specific. It is also dependent on personal ways of coping strategy and social support. It also suggested need for measures to reduce such stress and future research.

## References

- Austin A (1997) Four critical years. Effects of college on beliefs, attitudes and knowledge. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- Chickering, A (2003). The impact of various college environment on personality development. *Journal of the American College Health Association* 23 (2), 82-82.
- Cohen, s., Kamarck, T., and Mermelstein. R. (2001). A global measure of Perceived Stress. *Journal of Health and Social Behaviour*, 24, 385-396..
- Loeb, R., and Magee, P. (1992). Changes in attitudes and self-perception during the first two years of college. *Journal of College Student Development*, 33, 384 – 355.
- Macan, T. Shahani, C., Dipboye, R., & Phillips, a. (2000). College Students' time management: correlation's with academic performance and stress. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 82 (4), 760 – 768.
- Maio-Esteves, M (1990) Mediators of daily stress and perceived health status in adolescent girls. *Nursing Research*, 39 (6), 360-354.
- Makosky, V. (2001). Sources of Stress: Events or Conditions? In D Belle (Ed.), *Lives in stress*, Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Musser and Lloyd (2004). *The psychology of sex differences*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Neemann, J., & Harter, s. (1996). *Self Perception profile for college students*. University of Denver.
- Powell, L.N. (1997), "Issues in the Measurement of Type A Behavior Pattern," in *Stress and Health: Issues in Research Methodology*, ed. S.V. Kasl and CL. Cooper, London: John Wiley and Sons, 36-54.
- Seldin, P. (2001). Research findings on causes of academic stress. In P. Seldin (Ed.), *Coping with Faculty Stress* ( pp. 13± 24). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass
- Stake, J. & Orlofsky, J (1989). On the use of global and specific measures in assessing the self-esteem of males and females. *Sex Roles*, 7, 653-662.
- Waterman, A. (2001). Identity development from adolescence to adulthood: An extension of theory and a review of research. *Developmental Psychology*, 18, 341-358.

## Tables

**Gender**

	Frequency	Percent
Valid Male	64	64.0
Female	36	36.0
Total	100	100.0

**Physical factors**

	Frequency	Percent
Valid No Stress	18	18.0
Moderate Stress	21	21.0
Considerable Stress	29	29.0
High Stress	32	32.0
Total	100	100.0

**Stay in hostel**

	Frequency	Percent
Valid Hostel	32	32.0
Day Scholar	68	68.0
Total	100	100.0

**Social factors**

	Frequency	Percent
Valid No Stress	18	18.0
Moderate Stress	18	18.0
Considerable Stress	29	29.0
High Stress	35	35.0
Total	100	100.0

**Mode of travel**

	Frequency	Percent
Valid Walk	41	41.0
Public Transport/ College Bus	32	32.0
Own Vehicle	27	27.0
Total	100	100.0

**Emotional factors**

	Frequency	Percent
Valid No Stress	17	17.0
Moderate Stress	21	21.0
Considerable Stress	29	29.0
High Stress	33	33.0
Total	100	100.0

**Medium of school education**

	Frequency	Percent
Valid English	89	89.0
Regional	11	11.0
Total	100	100.0

**Level of Education**

	Frequency	Percent
Valid First year	47	46.5
Second year	54	53.5
Total	101	100.0

**Academic factor**

	Frequency	Percent
Valid No Stress	16	16.0
Moderate Stress	23	23.0
Considerable Stress	22	22.0
High Stress	39	39.0
Total	100	100.0

**Perceived stress \* Gender Crosstabulation**

			Gender		Total
			Male	Female	
Perceived stress	Yes	Count	51	28	79
		% within Perceived stress	64.6%	35.4%	100.0%
		% within Gender	79.7%	77.8%	79.0%
	No	Count	13	8	21
		% within Perceived stress	61.9%	38.1%	100.0%
		% within Gender	20.3%	22.2%	21.0%
Total	Count	64	36	100	
	% within Perceived stress	64.0%	36.0%	100.0%	
	% within Gender	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

**Chi-Square Tests**

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2 sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.051	1	.822
N of Valid Cases	100		

**Perceived stress \* Mode of travel Crosstabulation**

			Mode of travel			Total
			Walk	Public Transport/ College Bus	Own Vehicle	
Perceived stress	Yes	Count	27	30	22	79
		% within Perceived stress	34.2%	38.0%	27.8%	100.0%
		% within Mode of travel	65.9%	93.8%	81.5%	79.0%
	No	Count	14	2	5	21
		% within Perceived stress	66.7%	9.5%	23.8%	100.0%
		% within Mode of travel	34.1%	6.3%	18.5%	21.0%
Total	Count	41	32	27	100	
	% within Perceived stress	41.0%	32.0%	27.0%	100.0%	
	% within Mode of travel	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	



### Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2 sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	8.568	2	.014
N of Valid Cases	100		

### Perceived stress \* Stay in hostel Crosstabulation

			Stay in hostel		Total
			Hostel	Day Scholar	
Perceived stress	Yes	Count	22	57	79
		% within Perceived stress	27.8%	72.2%	100.0%
		% within Stay in hostel	68.8%	83.8%	79.0%
	No	Count	10	11	21
		% within Perceived stress	47.6%	52.4%	100.0%
		% within Stay in hostel	31.3%	16.2%	21.0%
Total	Count	32	68	100	
	% within Perceived stress	32.0%	68.0%	100.0%	
	% within Stay in hostel	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

### Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2 sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	2.980	1	.084

## ANOVA : Stress factors and Gender

### Descriptives

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Academic factor	Male	64	3.0781	1.04357	.13045
	Female	36	2.4167	1.13074	.18846
	Total	100	2.8400	1.11663	.11166
Physical factors	Male	64	2.8906	1.05586	.13198
	Female	36	2.5000	1.13389	.18898
	Total	100	2.7500	1.09521	.10952
Social factors	Male	64	2.6563	1.11581	.13948
	Female	36	3.0833	1.05221	.17537
	Total	100	2.8100	1.10732	.11073
Emotional factors	Male	64	2.5781	1.10991	.13874
	Female	36	3.1389	.96074	.16012
	Total	100	2.7800	1.08786	.10879

### ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Academic factor	Between Groups	10.081	1	10.081	8.715	.004
	Within Groups	113.359	98	1.157		
	Total	123.440	99			
Physical factors	Between Groups	3.516	1	3.516	2.990	.087
	Within Groups	115.234	98	1.176		
	Total	118.750	99			
Social factors	Between Groups	4.203	1	4.203	3.514	.064
	Within Groups	117.188	98	1.196		
	Total	121.390	99			
Emotional factors	Between Groups	7.245	1	7.245	6.460	.013
	Within Groups	109.915	98	1.122		
	Total	117.160	99			

### Descriptives

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Academic factor	Fist year	46	2.847 8	1.05340	.15532
	Second year	54	2.833 3	1.17762	.16025
	Total	100	2.840 0	1.11663	.11166
Physical factors	Fist year	46	2.826 1	1.03932	.15324
	Second year	54	2.685 2	1.14635	.15600
	Total	100	2.750 0	1.09521	.10952
Social factors	Fist year	46	2.739 1	1.21901	.17973
	Second year	54	2.870 4	1.01025	.13748
	Total	100	2.810 0	1.10732	.11073
Emotional factors	Fist year	46	2.608 7	1.12503	.16588
	Second year	54	2.925 9	1.04343	.14199
	Total	100	2.780 0	1.08786	.10879

### ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Academic factor	Between Groups	.005	1	.005	.004	.949
	Within Groups	123.43 5	98	1.260		
	Total	123.44 0	99			
Physical factors	Between Groups	.493	1	.493	.409	.524
	Within Groups	118.25 7	98	1.207		
	Total	118.75 0	99			
Social factors	Between Groups	.428	1	.428	.347	.557
	Within Groups	120.96 2	98	1.234		
	Total	121.39 0	99			
Emotional factors	Between Groups	2.500	1	4.998	3.137	.047
	Within Groups	114.66 0	98	1.670		
	Total	117.16 0	99			