

# A RESEARCH PAPER ON “CAUSES OF STRESS AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS AND SUGGESTIVE MEASURES TO REDUCE STRESS”

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## **ABSTRACT**

*Stress arises when the combination of internal and external pressures exceeds the individual's resources to cope with their situation. For many young adults, college is the best time of life. These critical years can also be undermined by depression, anxiety and stress. Students are very likely to experience some or many stressors which may test their ability to cope: adapting to a new environment, balancing a heavy work load, making new friends, becoming more independent, and dealing with myriad of other issues. Looking from a closer perspective, the college students' encounters a number of challenges in his day to day life, therefore the whole idea of an existing and vibrant college life is unveiled by these challenges which in turn contribute to stress and if not dealt with can only escalate and hamper their academic performance, emotional and social well-being. The present paper examines the sources and effects of stress on the college students. It is hoped that the findings of the present study will assist college students to deal with stress and help advance knowledge on coping strategies to face life stress.*

**Keywords :** *College students, Mental stress, Stress source, Stress, Stressors*

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

College life is one of the most scintillating and memorable experience in an adolescents life. It is in college that an adolescent enjoys the vibrant environment, the company of friends, and the various academic and co-curricular activities, which enriches, nurtures and prepares the adolescent for adulthood. College students are at a critical period where they will enter adulthood. They are expected to be the elites in the society. Thus, they should enhance their stress management abilities so as to live a healthy life after entering the society. Adolescence is a stage of human development that occurs between childhood and adulthood. Due to fast physical changes and mental development at this stage, students may experience incompatibility of their mental development with their physical changes or with the social environment and then suffer from problems arising from inadequate adaptations. These problems may further cause psychological troubles and even induce deviant behaviors. Adolescence is a dangerous period of time where young people experience self organization and role confusion. For them, stress mainly comes from academic tests, interpersonal relations, relationship problems, life changes, and career exploration. Such stress may usually cause psychological, physical and behavioral problems.

**Stress** is the emotional and physical strain caused by our response to pressure from the outside world. Common stress reactions include tension, irritability, inability to concentrate, and a variety of physical symptoms that include headache and a fast heartbeat. Stress is a condition or feeling experienced when a person perceives that demands exceed the personal and social resources the individual is able to mobilize.

Stress is the body's nonspecific response to a demand placed on it---Hans Selye

Stress as a condition or feeling experienced when a person perceives that demands exceed the personal and social resources the individual is able to mobilize---Richard S. Lazarus

Nervous tension that results from internal conflicts from a wide range of external situations--- D' Souza

This study examines the sources and effect of stress on college students.

## **II. OBJECTIVES**

1. To assess the level of stress among college students.
2. To find out the sources and effects of stress.
3. To give suggestive measures to overcome stress.

## **III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Academic problems have been reported to be the most common source of stress for students (Aldwin & Greenberger, 1987). Schafer (1996) observed that the most irritating daily hassles were usually school-related stressors such as constant pressure of studying, too little time, writing term papers, taking tests, future plans, and boring instructors. Stress associated with academic activities has been linked to various negative outcomes, such as poor health (Greenberg, 1981; Lesko & Summerfield, 1989), depression (Aldwin & Greenberger, 1987), and poor academic performance (Clark & Rieker, 1986; Linn & Zeppa, 1984). Lesko and Summerfield (1989) found a significant positive correlation between the incidence of illness and the number of exams and assignments. Similarly, Aldwin and Greenberger (1987) observed that perceived academic stress was related to anxiety and depression in college students. A number of studies have explored a relationship between stress and poor academic performance (Clark & Rieker, 1986; Linn & Zeppa, 1984; Struthers, Perry & Menec, 2000). Felsten and Wilcox (1992) found a significant negative correlation between the stress levels of college students and their academic performance. Similarly, in a study, 51 Blumberg and Flaherty (1985) found an inverse relationship between self-reported stress level and academic performance. Struthers et al. (2000) also reported that a high level of academic stress was associated with lower course grades. Students experience a high level of academic stress due to exams, assignments, time pressure, grade pressure, and uncertainty. In summary, this stress has a detrimental effect on their academic performance. Stressed children show signs of emotional disabilities, aggressive behavior, shyness, social phobia and often lack interest in otherwise enjoyable activities. In a study Dawood (1995) revealed that students' stress affects their academic performance. He further showed that the most frequently mentioned stressor by students was school and fear related stressors. Many teenagers tend to become non-conformist and fall prey to teenage depression in response to a variety of growing up anxieties. However, stress induced fears and anxiety in children adversely affects children's performance at various levels.

#### **IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

A questionnaire survey was adopted in this paper. A questionnaire consisting of three sections was used for data collection. The first section of the questionnaire comprises of demographic information, the second section is a set of questions on academic, social, family, emotional and financial stressors and the last section includes the statements on positive and negative stress coping strategies. Participants in this study were college students of a reputed colleges of Bathinda city (Baba Farid College, Bathinda). Degree students who were pursuing their studies in different streams namely Arts and Commerce were selected. They were in between the age group of 18-21 years of age. Participants were briefed in their respective classrooms regarding the questionnaire. A total number of 100 questionnaires were distributed. Various tools are used to analyses the data such as ANOVA, F-test, Correlation, Weighted average, and Percentage Method.

#### **V. FINDINGS**

<b>Items</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	61	61
Female	39	39
<b>Total</b>	100	

The basic data analysis shows that out of the selected samples 61% were males and the remaining 39% were females

#### **Survey data analysis**

According to the analysis of the collected data the major causes of stress are : academic factors, social factors, family factors, emotional factors, and financial factors.

#### **(1) Academic factors**

85.71% out of female students responded that the major reason for the cause of stress as academic problems. Whereas, in case of males the percentage is 78.04 and they are pursuing third year degree courses. Stress from high expectations of teachers (67%), parents (83%) and self (52%) is usually an agony for students studying in colleges.

#### **(2) Social factors**

Formation of stress is also associated with social environment. Stress arises not only in a complicated and competitive environment but also in monotonous and stimulus-less one. It is obvious that only a small group of males (26.73%) and female (11.5%) consider social factors as a source of stress. The findings also suggest that social stress was not a concern for most of the participants especially the females.

#### **(3) Family factors**

Statistical analysis showed that among the stressors in family factor, "lack of support from parents" (68%) is considered as the strongest.52% of males consider it as the only reason for stress.

#### **(4) Emotional factors**

The most important emotional stressors include : not feeling confident about oneself, feeling lonely, anxious and having no one to turn to and understand. Emotional stress is a major source of stress among students. Managing their romantic relationship can also be included and a great number of students (132 numbers, i.e 66%) mention this as a major cause of emotional stress.

#### **(5) Financial factors**

The most important financial stressors were not getting financial support from family for pursuing studies, parents control the money spent, insufficient money for paying personal mobile and internet expenses. Only 23.5% of the males and 32% of females were having a sound financial background as their families were able to support them for pursuing their studies.

### **VI. MEASURES TO REDUCE STRESS**

- Increase stress management abilities and learn to seek support.
- Make use of family support and release stress-reduced emotions.
- Effectively manage emotions and develop an optimistic view of life.
- Get involved with campus activities.

### **VII. CONCLUSION**

The major sources of stress found out in through the study have a direct relation with the stress level of students. The reasons for stress cannot be limited to these. It varies according to students and their psychology. In conclusion the results of this study are suggestive as to the necessary components of a stress management program specific to the needs of college students. Given the detrimental effects of stress on health and academic performance, college administrators should consider incorporating stress management training in orientation activities. A better approach may be the use of a stress management workshop, specifically geared to the stressors encountered by college students. Certainly, stress in the college setting cannot be eliminated but we can and should do a better job preparing students to manage it.

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