

# Percieved Role Stressors Amongst Students in Higher Education



Reema Agnes Frank, Rashmi Kodikal

**Abstract:** *Excellence in today's highly competitive workplace demands more than a thorough knowledge of specialized field. Achieving excellence in this dynamic era needs a comprehensive grounding in all the areas. In this scuffle of achieving excellence, performance pressures and indispensable surge for top positions, individuals and organizations are in a continuous state of tension, resulting in 'stress'.*

*Education sector is also undergoing a tremendous amount of stress where issues such as student retention and student progression are considered to be crucial for all universities. More-over the pressure mounts even on the students for better performance both in curricular and extracurricular activities which has become the prestige issue for both the institutions and the students.*

*In this regard, this paper tries to throw a light on the stress amongst the students in UG and PG colleges in Mangalore. In this context 216 under graduate and 108 post graduate commerce students were contacted with a survey questionnaire and analysis be done based on the various factors. This paper tries to bring us the factors which are leading to the student's stress and the suggestions to cope up the stress in order to improve the academic performance.*

**Keywords:** *Stress, Academic Performance, Higher education.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Stress is inevitable in modern life as the demand for achieving the milestones is much higher than the competency of every individual. The environment expects a tremendous performance in the society by every individual, human being who is not capable of matching the performance with the demand falls under the trap of stress (Vermunt & Steensman, 2005). Stress is nothing but the mental pressure encountered by the human beings due to their day to day activities. Every person in this world experiences stress irrespective of occupation, sector, cadre, gender, age, cultural background etc (Oyerinde, 2004).

The education industry was pointed out to be one of the least stressed industry, is turning out to be the most stressed in the recent years (Agolla and Ongori, 2009) due to tremendous competition. Every stake holder in the industry is stressed including the students for various factors such as course load (Talib and Zai-ur-Rehman, 2012), preparing for the exams (Baldwin et al., 2009), academic performance (Good and

Brophy, 1986), high competition amongst students and information overload (Sinha et al., 2001), assignments with deadlines (Misra et al., 2000), project work (Robotham, 2008), inclination towards research (Frank Reema and Kodikal Rashmi, 2019), co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, more than that the expectation of an all-round performance by the parents (Erkutlu and Chafra, 2006; Polychronopoulou and Divaris, 2005), poor time management (Macan et al., 1990). The factors related to the institution in which the student is studying will also contribute towards stress (Adesola and Arowolo, 2014) such as the inadequate resources to perform academic work (Agolla and Ongori, 2009; Awino and Agolla, 2008; Ongori, 2007), the better environmental conditions for a student and his need satisfaction can improve the positive emotions and commitment (Hagenauer Gerda et. al, 2018).

Stress in academia has been a long topic of research and many researchers have found the various factors impacting on the academic stress which includes excessive assignments, unhealthy competition among class students, fear of failure (Fairbrother & Wann, 2003), lack of interrelationship between the co students and the faculties, family problems, self indiscipline, lack of facilities for the students in the institution like cleanliness, spacious lecture hall and availability of LCD's (Ongori, 2007; Awino & Agolla, 2008).

Across the globe numerous studies have shown a deep concern towards stress in higher education, as it is the most important stage in every person's life. There are a few studies concentrated on students stress in India which tell us that as the academic performance correlates with the every semester achievements in the examination with class ranking, the tremendous pressure falls on the students to prepare for the examination in very short span of time (Rawson, Bloomer & Kendall, 1999). Academic stress is common for both male and female students but found that the junior students are facing more pressure compared to the senior students (Khan, Altaf Seema & Kausar Hafsa, 2013). Whereas Abdullah (2009) found there is a significant difference between the stress amongst the male and female students. As eustress (Kalpan & Sadock, 2000) is favourable towards the performance distress will definitely hinder the performance in academia (Wintre & Yaffe, 2000), but also causing tremendous problems like depression, anxiety, health related problems such as increased blood pressure and blood sugar, impatience, nervousness and strain (Williamson et. al, 2005, Agolla & Ongori, 2009). Many research findings on gender and students stress found a difference in male and female students on many factors such as their perception and reaction to stress (Misra and Castillo, 2004, Matthew Peter Shaw et. al, 2017), time management (Jogarathnam and Buchanan, 2004).

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As women are more emotional towards the surrounding reaction (Sulaiman et al., 2009) the stressors remained different. Even though there are individual differences many studies found no significant differences amongst students on the basis of gender (Watson, 2002; Bhosale, 2014; Omony and Ogunsanmi, 2012).

The faculties in the colleges can turnaround the student’s life if they are handled with utmost care (Frank Reema, Kodikal Rashmi, 2017). Hence avoiding the stress amongst the faculties too will create a healthy environment amongst the students.

**II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:**

The study focused on the following objectives:

- To know the various factors impacting on the stress amongst the university students.
- To assess the different types of stressors on students.
- To compare the difference in level of stress between demographic variables.
- To suggest the coping strategies in order to overcome academic stress.

**III. METHODOLOGY:**

The data was collection took place July/August 2018, through the self-administered survey questionnaire with Likert 5 point scale consisting of 6 factors namely academic related stress, time/balance stressors, interpersonal/ self stressors, relationships/interpersonal/social stressors, teaching quality/relationship with teachers/support from teacher’s stressors, environmental/campus/administrative/transition stressors. The questionnaire was slightly modified from Burge’s (2009) University Students Stress, comprises of 41 items distributed in the above 6 stressors. The questionnaire had a first part as the demographic data consisting of course details, Gender and total marks scored. The reliability of the questionnaire was assessed by kmo test with a value of 0.75.

Total of responses from 216 undergraduate courses and 108 responses from post graduate courses were collected from undergraduate commerce final year students from Mangalore region. Other departments were omitted because of their curriculum difference such as usage of laboratory for the experiments and practical exposure. The collected questionnaires were coded and entered into SPSS 16 for the purpose of analysis. Frequencies and percentages were calculated in order to assess the demographic data. Descriptive statistics techniques such as mean and standard deviation were applied to determine the most important stress factors among the study. The level of stress and academic performance was assessed using Spearman’s Rank Correlation. The Chi Square test has been carried out to know the most effecting stressors on the demographic profiles of the students.

**IV. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS:**

**Table 1: Demographic Profile of the respondents:**

Characteristic	UG		PG	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	96	45%	12	11%
Female	120	55%	96	89%

Courses				
BCOM	162	75%	MBA	94%
BBM	54	25%	MSW	6%
Results				
Distinction	108	50%	Distinction	44%
First class	90	42%	First class	50%
Second Class	18	8%	Second Class	6%

Source: Field Survey, Jan/Feb 2019

As demonstrated in the table 1, amongst the undergraduate students 55% of the respondents were female and 75% of the students are from the BCOM background. In relationship with the performance 50% of the students cleared exams with aggregate Distinction, 42% of the respondents with first class and the 8% of the students scored second class and completed their course. Under the Post graduate students majority are female students (89%), and from the MBA (94%) stream. With regards to performance 44% of the students cleared the examination with distinction, 50% with first class and 6% second class.

**Table 2: Composite scores of various stressors among the UG and PG students**

Type of stress category	UG			PG		
	Mean	Std. Devn	Rank	Mean	Std. Devn.	Rank
Total Studies Related Stressors (SRS)	3.66	0.41	1	4	0.82	1
Total Time/Balance Stressors (TTBS)	3.58	0.15	2	3.69	1.26	2
Total Environmental/ Campus/ Administrative/ Transition Stressors (TECATS)	3.45	0.46	3	3.49	1.03	3
Total Interpersonal / Self Stressors (TISS)	2.94	0.28	4	2.67	1.11	5
Total Teaching Quality/ Relations with Teachers/ Support from teachers Stressors (TTRSS)	2.88	0.22	5	3.36	1.19	4
Total Relationships / Interpersonal / Social Stressors (TRISS)	2.55	0.17	6	2.48	1.20	6

Source: Field Survey, Jan/Feb 2019

The above table we were able to ascertain the most important stressors among the UG and PG students which helped us to understand which the stressors are affecting more on the students. It was found that “TSRS” (M = 3.66 for UG and 4 for PG) ranked first which gives us the clear meaning that students are very much stressed about the exams, getting good grades, academic work load, assessment deadlines and writing the exams which justifies the literature (Rawson, Bloomer & Kendall, 1999).



“TTBS” (M = 3.58 for UG and 3.69 for PG) ranked second with factors such as poor time management it can be on the assignment submissions or self study or preparation for the exams. This is an internal stressor if the students organize themselves with a proper timetable this stress can be minimized. The third important stressor was “TECATS” (M = 3.45 for UG and 3.49 for PG), which consists of lack of administrative help, internet facilities, recreational activities, quality campus and adjustments to the campus environment supporting the literature (Ongori, 2007; Awino & Agolla, 2008). This stressor is very important one which the management of every college must consider so that the students can be provided with best facilities. Another issue is the academic syllabus is so vast that the students are compelled to be in the classrooms from 9 am to 5 pm everyday which kills all the time for recreational facilities. The fourth factor turned out to be “TISS” (M = 2.94) for UG which tells that students feel they are incompatible or low in motivation. The teachers are the best people to identify and help these students because teachers will generally interact with all the students. Teachers can win the students confidence and make him a successful person. But for PG it happened to be but “TRSS” (M = 3.36) where the students are more stressed in accessing the study materials, lack of future oriented learning skills, difficulty in approaching the staff members, research orientation (Frank Reema, Kodikal Rashmi, 2019). The fifth important factor for UG students talks about “TTRSS” (M= 2.88), which means that the students feel the support from the teaching staff can lead them to pinnacle of success which also supports the fourth factor. For PG students it turned out to be “TISS” (M = 2.67), speaks about lack of interpersonal skills and self management. The “TRISS” (M = 2.55) factor seems to be less stressful for both UG and PG students compared to all which says students are good at maintaining interpersonal relationships with other students which will definitely help them in studies by exchanging notes and information related to the subjects.

In depth analysis of the demographic variables with stressors:

The Chi Square test conducted between male and female students found that there is a significance difference between the various stressors at 5% level of significance supporting the previous literatures on the gender and stress life of students were giving the contradicting results as some studies says there is no difference between the gender and stress (Khan, Altaf Seema & Kausar Hafsa, 2013), where as some studies says stress varies between the male and female students (Abdullah, 2009). Hence in depth analysis of the various stress categories supports the significance difference.

Type of stress category	Male	Female	Chi	P
Total Academic Stressors (TACS)	1.647	2.162	28.8458	0
Total Time/Balance Stressors (TTBS)	1.941	2.027	1.0302	0.597
Total Environmental / Campus/ Administrative / Transition Stressors (TECATS)	1.882	2.054	28.8458	0
Total Interpersonal / Self Stressors (TISS)	2.353	1.838	28.8458	0
Total Teaching Quality/ Relations with Teachers/ Support from teachers Stressors (TTRSS)	1.588	2.189	50.481	0
Total Relationships / Interpersonal / Social Stressors (TRISS)	2.353	1.838	7.2114	0.027

**Table 3: Gender wise composite mean scores of various stressors among the students.**

Source: Field Survey, Jan/Feb 2019

The table 4 analyses in detail the mean scores of the UG and PG students to find out whether the perception of total stressors vary by gender found that female students rated higher on their level of stress specifically for “TACS” ( p = 0.000), “TECATS” (p = 0.000), “TTRSS” (p= 0.000) where as male students rated higher on “TISS” (p =0.000) and “TRISS” (p=0.027)

The Results of Chi Square test demonstrates that there is a significance difference between the stressors in the UG and PG courses at 5% level of significance. However in depth analysis of the same showed the following results.

**Table 4: Course wise composite mean scores of various stressors among the students.**

Type of stress category	UG	PG	Chi	P
Total Academic Stressors (TACS)	1.926	2.074	2.6667	0.264
Total Time/Balance Stressors (TTBS)	1.852	2.148	18.6667	0

Total Environmental/ Campus/ Administrative/ Transition Stressors (TECATS)	1.815	2.185	2.6667	0.264
Total Interpersonal / Self Stressors (TISS)	2.037	1.963	18.6667	0
Total Teaching Quality/ Relations with Teachers/ Support from teachers Stressors (TTRSS)	1.815	2.185	18.6667	0
Total Relationships / Interpersonal / Social Stressors (TRISS)	2.037	1.963	18.6667	0

Source: Field Survey, Jan/Feb 2019

The table 4 demonstrates the varied stress for UG and PG courses, under which the PG course found to be more stressful in “TTBS” (p = 0.000), “TTRSS” (p = 0.000) whereas the UG students were highly stressed for “TISS (p = 0.000) and “TRISS” (p = 0.000).

	SRS	TBS	ISS	RISS	TRSS
SRS	1.0000				
TBS	0.4722	1.0000			
ISS	-0.0278	0.2222	1.0000		
RISS	-0.0278	0.2222	1.0000	1.0000	
TRSS	0.2778	0.1389	0.1111	0.1111	1.0000
ECATS	0.3611	0.2778	0.2778	0.2778	0.3611
RESU	0.1429	0.2402	-0.1429	0.1429	0.2340
LTS	0.0953	1.0000			
	0.0100	0.0000	0.0100	0.0100	0.0000
	0.0869				

**Table 5: The interrelationship between the various stressors**

Source: Field Survey, Jan/Feb 2019

The table 5 demonstrates the interrelationship between the various stressors found that TBS is showing a positive correlation with SRS, ISS is positively correlated to TBS, RISS is positively correlated to TBS and ISS. RISS shows a positive correlation with TBS and ISS where as TRSS shows a positive correlation with SRS and TBS. The

stressor EACTS shows a positive correlation with SRS, TBS, ISS, RISS, TRSS.

**V. CONCLUSION**

Hence through this paper we were able to define the academic stress amongst the UG students and we were able to identify the various stressors. It is also said a little amount of positive stress is important to motivate the students to perform better, but still the distress will lead to disasters in the student’s life by affecting the learning and memory (Saipanish 2003). Stress can also cause physical and mental health problems (Dwayer & Cummings, 2001), reduces the confidence level (Neimi & Vainiomaki, 1999) and on extreme cases the student might end his/her life which is happening in most of the cases in modern days. Hence we can say that academic stress is inevitable hence students, teachers and the college management must use the coping strategies to overcome the stress. It is also very clear from the study that all the stressors are interrelated to each other which means that triggering any one type of stress amongst the students will also increase all others simultaneously which will become a larger part influencing the performance of the students.

First of all the students must try for themselves to reduce the stress within like trying to adapt to the college life as early as possible so that they can more concentrate on studies. Colleges must guide the students to develop interpersonal skills so that they can share their problems, seek guidance and reduce the burden with their friends and family. Time Management techniques and avoiding the electronic gadgets would save a lot of productive time which can be directly utilized in the curricular and co-curricular activities. Colleges can also think of starting the counselling units in the campuses, psychology workshops to students which help them to relax. The teachers involved with students are also human beings and even they are stressed. So therefore stress relieving activities for staff and extracurricular activities and leisure time is added to the staff then their stress burden can be released. The teachers can be the best counsellors for students who can shape us the students life entirely may be academic performance, career counselling, future planning and career advancement.

The institutions and the faculties towards the understanding of student’s interest in enrolling for a specific course and helping them in shaping their career would definitely help in stress reduction (Chris Maharaj et. al, 2018) and higher commitment which would be definitely helpful in long term. It is always said a sound mind in a sound body. The modern generation is full of health issues due to unbalanced fast food culture. The health issues too will lead to the stress. Therefore students must take care of themselves and the environment will be stress free. This will give strong indications towards the academic performance and also to the overall development of a student.

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