

## **An analytical study on stress and its effects among college students in Kerala**

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### **Abstract:**

Students faces number of problems during their adolescence period , it creates more stress with various reasons. It could be with because of excess responsibility, adjusting with existing surrounding, adjustment with new friends, worries about academic achievement, adjusting with existing faculties, food habits or may be thinking about the future. In this paper, the researcher is trying to identify the various symptoms of reasons of stress experienced by youngsters in a small area of Thrissur District in Kerala state.

**Key words : Stress, Academic Pressure, Financial Task**

### **1.1 Introduction**

Stress is a term that almost everybody from all walks of life knows and uses, yet understanding and assessing stress is a complex task. It is often loosely used to refer to any situation that evokes negative thoughts and feelings in a person. The same situation is not evocative or stressful for all people, and all people do not experience the same negative thoughts and feelings when stressed. Stress is often described as a feeling of being overloaded, wound-up tight, tense and worried. We all experience stress at times. It can sometimes help to motivate us to get a task finished, or perform well. But stress can also be harmful if we become over-stressed and it interferes with our ability to get on with our normal life for too long.

1. Many people may not be aware that they are undergoing stress; few recognize that events such as pregnancy, retirement, marriage, death of a close family member, divorce, and writing exams or a number of smaller events, overload the adaptive system of the body, which causes high levels of stress . Stress is an inevitable part of life; all the age group in the society is facing stress, among the age group teenagers have highest stress. For many teenagers, college is the best time of life. These critical years of adjustment can also be undermined by depression, anxiety, substance abuse and eating disorders. College students today experience high levels of stress in many areas of life. The act of balancing a busy life along with education causes stress and depression. Limited stress is beneficial and can lead to excellent performance. Yet, uncontrolled stress can lead to exhaustion, depression and several other illnesses. In fact, college students are prone to episodic stress. This happens when exams are around the corner. Stress and depression also occur when getting ready for a presentation or an interview. Several students contemplate or commit suicide.

College life can be very stressful in one way or the other. Generally, we idealize the college experience and remember it as that idyllic time when we had few worries or responsibilities. To students currently attending college, however, the process is often stressful and frustrating. The

competition for grades, the need to perform, peer relationships, fear of failure, career choice, and many other aspects of the college environments are real life challenges that manifest as mental stress.

Many people don't think about stress management unless they're already on the verge of burnout. With our busy lives, it doesn't always seem obviously important to take on the practice of stress management before a worn-out body or an overly taxed psyche force the issue. However, developing healthy stress relieving habits really do pay off in the long run. Not only does a regular stress management practice stave off the negative effects of stress, but it can also bring positive outcomes like increased productivity, better health and more happiness in general. Thus the study was conducted to know about the stress and its effects among the college students in Kerala.

## **1.2 Statement of Problem**

College students are at a critical period where they will enter adulthood. For many young adults, college is the best time of life. These critical years of adjustment can also be undermined by depression, anxiety, substance abuse and eating disorders. Researchers are finding that many mental illnesses are traced to trauma, whose damage surfaces in times of stress and change, such as the college years. 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. According to Department of Statistics, Ministry of Education (2007), For college freshmen, they need to not only adapt themselves to the new life and new environment but also be familiar with many new people, events, and things. The life stress on them is considerable. 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. According to statistics of 2005~2008, the number of suicide (including self-injury) cases is the highest among college/university students, and female students take a much larger proportion of the suicide (including self-injury) cases. Among the causes of suicide or self-injury, relationship problems are the leading cause, followed by depression and academic stress. Obviously, stress is the primary cause of suicide (or self-injury) among college/university students (Campus Security Report Center, Ministry of Education, 2009). Therefore, understanding the sources of stress among them and how they can cope with the stress is very important.

## **1.3 Scope of the Study**

The study was carried out to promote a better understanding of stress faced by the college students. This sought to analyze how much stress college students perceive that they are experiencing and what are the most common sources of stress within this group. It also analyzed the methods college students use to relax and with what frequency. Finally, it looked at the effectiveness of chosen methods of relaxation to reduce perceived stress levels

## **1.4 Significance of the Study**

Many researchers have found that there is a direct relationship between stress and academic performance of college students. This study would help the students to discover the various stressors affecting their academics and personal life. It helps the teachers determining the stressors affecting their students and to guide the students in reducing the stress level so that they are more shaped and ready to face the challenges confidently. The study also gives an insight to the management to design and implement new programs that would facilitate in reducing the stress on students.

### 1.5 Objective of the Study

The main objective of this study is to identify sources of stress and its effects on students' life.

The following are the specific objectives

- To identify the various sources of stress experienced by the students and its effects on students.

### 1.6 Hypothesis

- There is no association between gender and academic stress levels.
- There is no association between gender and personal stress levels.
- There is no association between gender and physical stress levels.
- There is no association between gender and social stress levels.
- There is no association between gender and psychological stress levels

### 1.7 Research Methodology

#### 1.7.1 Research Design

The nature of the study is both descriptive and analytical. It includes surveys and fact finding enquiries of different kind. The major purpose of this research is the description of stress and its effect on students.

#### 1.7.2 Sampling Method

The sampling method used in this study is proportionate stratified random sampling. Under this method all the students in a college from Thrissur District Kerala divided into 2 strata's. First strata indicate first year arts and science students' second strata mentioned about gender. Within each stratum a proportionate random sample is used for selecting the respondents.

#### 1.7.3 Sample size

Gender	Arts			Science					Total
	Eco	F E	B.Com	Maths	Phy	Chem	Zoo	Geo	
Male	27	11	27	16	24	18	15	23	161
Female	33	28	33	35	30	35	27	18	239
Total	60	39	60	51	54	53	42	41	400

The Total male and female students in the first year arts and science batches are 161 and 239 respectively. From each stratum (gender) 25% of the respondents were selected to frame the sample size of 100 that is 43 males and 57 females.

#### 1.7.4 Data collection

##### Primary data

Survey method is used to collect the data from respondents the help of structured questionnaire and personal interview.

##### Secondary data

In this study secondary data is collected from internet, journals, reference books and project reports.

### 1.8 Tools Used for Analysis

Appropriate statistical tools are used for analysis such as simple statistical tool i.e., percentage analysis and inferential analysis is done through chi-square test.

## Section II

### 2.1 Data analysis and interpretation

The collected data was analyzed though Chi- Square Test of Independence used for testing association between gender and different stress levels

#### 1. To test the association between gender and academic stress levels

*Null Hypothesis ( $H_0$ )* There is no significant association between gender and academic stress levels.

*Alternative Hypothesis ( $H_1$ )* There is significant association between gender and academic stress levels

Table 2.1 Cross tabulation for gender and academic stress level

Gender	Stress level					Row Total
	No stress	Slightly	Average	Above Average	Hard core	
Male	7	12	11	8	5	43
Female	11	9	18	13	6	57
Colum Total	18	21	29	21	11	100

Degree of freedom = 4, Level of significance = 5%, Calculated value = 2.37, Chi - square table value = 9.48

Inference : Hence the chi - square value is less than the table value we accept the null hypothesis and conclude that there is no significant association between gender and academic stress levels.

#### 2. To test the association between gender and personal stress level

*Null Hypothesis ( $H_0$ )* There is no significant association between gender and personal stress levels.

*Alternative Hypothesis ( $H_1$ )*

There is significant association between gender and personal stress levels

Table 2.2 Cross tabulation for gender and personal stress level

Gender	Stress level					Total
	No stress	Slightly	Average	Above Average	Hard core	
Male	8	15	9	5	6	43
Female	11	14	13	10	9	57
Total	19	24	22	15	15	100

Degree of freedom = 4, Level of significance = 5%, Calculated value = 7.76, Chi - square table value = 9.48

Inference : Hence the chi - square value is less than the table value we accept the null hypothesis and conclude that there is no significant association between gender and personal stress levels.

#### 3. To test the association between gender and physical stress level

*Null Hypothesis ( $H_0$ )* There is no significant association between gender and physical stress levels.

*Alternative Hypothesis ( $H_1$ )* There is significant association between gender and physical stress levels

Table 2.3 Cross tabulation for gender and physical stress level

Gender	Stress level				Total
	No stress	Slightly	Average	Above Average	
Male	16	13	8	6	43
Female	11	21	20	5	57
Total	27	34	28	11	100

Degree of freedom = 3, Level of significance = 5%, Calculated value = 5.92, Chi - square table value = 7.815

Inference : Hence the chi - square value is less than the table value we accept the null hypothesis and conclude that there is no significant association between gender and physical stress levels.

#### 4. To test the association between gender and psychological stress level

*Null Hypothesis ( $H_0$ )* There is no significant association between gender and psychological stress levels.

*Alternative Hypothesis ( $H_1$ )* There is significant association between gender and psychological stress levels

Table 2.4

Cross tabulation for gender and psychological stress level

Gender	Stress level					Total
	No stress	Slightly	Average	Above Average	Hard core	
Male	6	5	17	10	5	43
Female	9	6	25	11	6	57
Total	15	11	42	21	11	100

Degree of freedom = 4, Level of significance = 5%, Calculated value = 0.5048, Chi - square table value = 9.48

Inference : Hence the chi - square value is less than the table value we accept the null hypothesis and conclude that there is no significant association between gender and psychological stress levels.

#### 5. To test the association between gender and social stress level

*Null Hypothesis ( $H_0$ )* There is no significant association between gender and social stress levels.

*Alternative Hypothesis ( $H_1$ )* There is significant association between gender and social stress levels

Table 2.5

Cross tabulation for gender and social stress level

Gender	Stress level				Total
	No stress	Slightly	Average	Above Average	
Male	18	15	5	5	43
Female	26	18	8	5	57
Total	44	33	13	10	100

Degree of freedom = 3, Level of significance = 5%, Calculated value = 0.4683  
Chi - square table value = 7.815

Inference : Hence the chi – square value is less than the table value we accept the null hypothesis and conclude that there is no significant association between gender and social stress levels.

### Section III

#### It depicts the findings and conclusions of the analysis

##### 3.1 findings of the study

- Out of the total sample 57% of the respondents are female and 47% of the respondents are male.
- Most of the respondents 72% are feels stressed in their college life.
- Majority of the respondents (77%) reason for stress is academic factor. 10% of them are stressed due to personal factor, 6% family and remaining stressed due to social, 3% physical 3%, and psychological 2%.
- Most (74%) of the respondents are in between 75% to 100%, no one is below 25% of marks.
- Majority of the respondents (45%) have average stress with their financial problems. 29% of the respondents have no stress with their financial problems
- Majority (60%) of students do not have stress about their diet problems, 7% of the respondent have above average and hard core stress.
- Most of the respondent has above average stress because of lack of time for relaxation. But 28% do not have stress
- About 32% of the respondent says that they have above average stress at illness, 30% of them have average stress 20% of respondent have stress at hard core.
- Many of the respondents (35%) of the respondent have above average stress related with their semester time.
- The 34% of the respondents have above average stress on meeting deadlines for assignment and those who have no stress comes to just around 19%.
- The 26% of the students have average stress with the examination system, while 9% of the respondent does not have stress. The examination system cause stress at hard core for 16% of the students
- Majority (46%) of the respondent have slightly stressed stress because of Inability to speak in public, 8%feel stress at hard core.
- The respondents are not stressed with Change in social activities. 52% of the respondents have no stress with the Change in social activities.
- Religious belief, excess anger and loneliness do not create stress to the respondents.
- Majority of the female respondents are stressed most due to it is the first time they are studying in a mixed college.
- The college rules and regulations create stress among college students.
- The 52% of the respondents have average stress with the Attitude of faculty members
- Majority (41%) of the respondent have no stress because of their relationships (boyfriend/girlfriend) or marital status.
- The 60% of the students work well under stress and 40% does not work well under stress. So in some cases stress is needed to do work completely.
- Most of the students don't have stress in personal life.18% have stress at maximum.
- From this study most (38%) of the respondents reduce their stress by talking with their friends.32% of the students listen music as a stress releaser

- Stress affects body and mind. More than half of the respondents suffer head-ache and upset of stomach due to stress. 52% of the students unable to concentrate due to stress
- Nearly half of the respondents are suffering from stress, so they follow personal strategies to manage stress. Majority of the respondents talk to their friends to reduce stress. Some of them listen music to reduce stress.
- Chi-square analysis reveals the following results
- There is no significant association between gender and academic stress levels.
- There is no significant association between gender and personal stress levels.
- There is no significant association between gender and physical stress levels.
- There is no significant association between gender and psychological stress levels
- There is no significant association between gender and social stress levels.

### 3.2 Conclusion

Stress is an inevitable part of today's fast life. In this age of globalization everywhere we feel competition due to this people take any risk in order to win. Especially Stress in academic institutions can have both positive and negative consequences if not well managed. Academic institutions have different work settings compared to non-academic and therefore one would expect the differences in symptoms, causes, and consequences of stress. By identifying the sub issues of each component of stress among college students, College stressors have wide varieties, from academic work to uncertainty about the future, from difficulties in interpersonal relationships to dating problems, from self-doubt to family issues, and the list goes on.

Stress is highly individualistic in nature. In small quantities, stress is good; it can motivate and help students to become more productive. However, too much stress, or a strong response to stress can be harmful. How we perceive a stress provoking event and how we react to it determines its impact on our health. There are strong chances for this stress to break a person, both, internally and externally, also on mind and body and so, it is wise to adapt the best and possible ways to handle it, at the right time.

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### Appendices

The following factors were used for rating the degree of stress among students

Factors	No stress	Slight stress	Average	Above average	Hard core
<b>❖ Personal and Family factors</b>					
1. Being away from your family members					
2. High expectation of your parents					
3. Any trouble with your parents					
4. Financial problems in your family					
5. Divorced or separated parents					

6. Death of family members					
❖ <b>Physical factors</b>					
7. Your physical appearance stress you					
8. Does diet play any role					
9. Stress due to lack of time for relaxation					
10. Change in sleeping habits affects you					
11. Any illness create stress					
❖ <b>Academic factors</b>					
12. do you have any stress related with your semester time					
13. Whether your classes or workload in class cause stress					
14. Meeting deadlines for assignment					
15. competition from fellow students affect you					
16. The semester system add to your stress					
17. Missing classes add to your stress					
18. Lower grade than anticipated					
19. Faculty treating different peer groups differently					
20. Attitude of faculty members stress you					
21. Rules and regulations in the college					
❖ <b>Social factors</b>					
22. Change in social activities					
23. Inability to speak in public					
24. Change in personal habits					
25. Your relationships(boyfriend/girlfriend)or marital status create any stress					
26. change in religious beliefs					
❖ <b>psychological factors</b>					
27. Excess anger stress you					
28. Loneliness stress you					
29. Unrealistic expectations affect you					
30. Excessive self criticism					
31. Does the peer pressure any role					

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