

## **A STUDY ON STRESS AND ITS EFFECTS ON COLLEGE STUDENTS**

**Dr. R. SATHYA DEVI.** (Department of International Business, Sree Narayana Guru College, Coimbatore)

**SHAJ MOHAN** (M.Phil scholar, Sree Narayana Guru College, Coimbatore)  
Thachanghat House, Thachampara PO, Palakkad-- Mobile- 9645862467-

### **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.

**Key words :** College students, Stress, Stressors

## 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.

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

### **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.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

According to Lazarus & Folkman (1984), stress is a mental or physical phenomenon formed through one's cognitive appraisal of the stimulation and is a result of one's interaction with the environment. The existence of stress depends on the existence of the stressor.

Feng (1992) and Volpe (2000) defined stressor as anything that challenges any individual's adaptability or stimulates an individual's body or mentality. Stress can be caused by environmental factors, psychological factors, biological factors, and social factors. It can be negative or positive to an individual, depending on the strength and persistence of the stress, the individual's personality, cognitive appraisal of the stress and social support.

## **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 enrolled in two reputed colleges of Mannarkkad city (Palakkad district, Kerala). Degree students who were pursuing their studies in different streams namely Arts, Commerce and Science 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 and the scale and confidentiality of the data was assured to the participants. A total number of 200 questionnaires were distributed, out of which 200 completed the questionnaire in

the presence of the investigators.

Convenience sampling method was used for data collection. Various tools are used to analyse the data such as ANOVA, F-test, Correlation, Weighted average, and Percentage Method.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Basic data analysis

Items	Numbers	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	123	61.5
Female	77	38.5
<b>Total</b>	200	100.0
<b>Grade</b>		
First year	86	43.0
Second year	47	23.5
Third year	67	33.5
<b>Total</b>	200	100.0
<b>College</b>		
A	114	57.0
B	86	43.0
<b>Total</b>	200	100.0

The basic data analysis shows that out of the selected samples 61.5% were males and the remaining 38.5% were females. The demographic information on gender, course and year of study, accommodation, etc. was collected and it was found that 88% of the participants resided in their own house during the course of study. The remaining were residing in the hostel.

### **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.

### **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.

### **SUGGESTIONS**

#### **(1) Suggestions for college administrators.**

- (a) Identify student's stress as soon as possible and provide adequate support.
- (b) Incorporate career development programs in to formal curricula.
- (c) Design general curriculum on stress and stress coping strategies.
- (d) Pay attention to students' stress in learning.

**(2) Suggestions for students**

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

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