



STRESS: A STUDY ON UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN CHENNAI

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ABSTRACT

In today's fast-paced and technology-driven world, stress has become an ever present challenge affecting the well-being of individuals, with college students being particularly susceptible to its impacts. This survey aims to comprehensively explore the multifaceted dimensions of stress within our modern society, shedding light on the unique stressors faced by college students. This study investigates the frequency, causes, and coping mechanisms associated with stress among college students. It also delves into the role of technology, social media, financial concerns, and academic pressures in exacerbating stress levels. Furthermore, the survey explores the efficacy of various stress management strategies and the availability of support systems for young adults navigating these stressors. The findings from this survey will not only contribute to a deeper understanding of stress in our contemporary world but also provide valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and mental health professionals in crafting targeted interventions to promote the well-being of college students and individuals facing stress in modern society.

KEY WORDS: Technology, stressors, well-being, PG (Paying Guest)

INTRODUCTION

In the landscape of modern society, stress has emerged as a ubiquitous companion, an unwelcome presence that transcends boundaries of age, occupation, and socioeconomic status. It is a silent adversary that infiltrates our lives, impacting our mental and physical well-being, our relationships, and even our societal structures. In an era characterized by unprecedented technological advancements, rapid globalization, and ever-evolving societal norms, the sources and manifestations of stress have evolved, becoming increasingly intricate and multifaceted. At the forefront of this exploration are college students, a demographic uniquely positioned at the intersection of youthful vigor and the challenges of higher education? They stand as emblematic figures representing the broader struggles faced by many in our modern society. The college experience, once celebrated as a time of intellectual growth and personal

development, has become synonymous with stress, with academic pressures, financial constraints, and societal expectations converging to create a crucible of challenges.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

An Analytical observational study about a disease called “*Stress*” in the modern society. As stress has become an omnipresent feature of modern society, affecting individuals across age groups and backgrounds. College students, in particular, represent a demographic facing a unique confluence of stressors, from academic pressures to financial concerns, therefore making them as a significant population to study.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The main objective of this study is

1. To identify the sources of stress and its effects on Under Graduate student's life.
2. To find out the level of academic stress among undergraduate students during their year of Study.
3. To suggest suitable remedial measures to minimize the student's stress during their academic Year.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

Children's stress is a serious problem that requires proper treatment to avoid serious consequences. Research on psychological issues among college students, including stress, anxiety, and depression, has revealed that these conditions are underdiagnosed and undertreated. Unfortunately, if these problems are not identified, psychological morbidity increases, having unfavorable repercussions on people's lives and jobs.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Don't Feed the Monkey Mind: How to Break the Pattern of Fear, Worry, and Anxiety According to Jennifer Shannon (New Harbinger Publisher, 2017), there are coping mechanisms that we can employ to lessen the symptoms of anxiety, but they can also exacerbate them. Shannon attributes anxiety symptoms to the flight or fight response that has always existed as a survival mechanism, drawing comparisons between the brains of humans and our primate ancestors. Shannon offers cognitive-behavioral techniques that can assist in challenging the three common assumptions—perfectionism, over-responsibility, and tolerance of uncertainty—that the majority of anxious persons hold. These assumptions are what lead to anxious behaviors.

Be Calm: Proven Techniques to Stop Anxiety Now by Jill Weber (Embassy Books, 2022). For people who suffer from symptoms associated with anxiety, this book is a great resource. It classifies the various signs of anxiety that a person may encounter (such as panic, avoidance behavior, or worry). Using the index, readers can locate the exact problem they are having and obtain the right resources to assist them manage their symptoms. In addition, the book offers journaling prompts with a "Go Deeper" section that invites readers to consider more thoroughly the possible causes of their worry.

According to Judson Brewer's book Unwinding Anxiety: New Science Shows How to Break the Cycles of Worry and Fear to Heal Your Mind (Avery, 2021), it's critical to understand the science behind how anxious behaviors arise in our brains. An introduction for those who are struggling with anxiety, a

synopsis of the many therapeutic approaches, and simple, practical methods for incorporating them are all included in the book.

Alice Boyes' book *The Anxiety Toolkit: Techniques for Streamlining Your Thoughts and Getting Past Your Stuck Points* (Tarcher Perigee, 2015), This book provides readers with important information regarding social anxiety and anxiety associated with work or business, with a focus on managing anxiety in particular situations. Readers can work through the unique anxiety worksheets in each chapter to identify their anxiety triggers and identify the best ways to cope with their symptoms. Every chapter starts with a quiz that asks readers to determine if the problems and symptoms covered relate to them or not.

THE STRESS RESPONSE: A NATURAL SURVIVAL MECHANISM

Stress, at its core, is an ancient and adaptive response mechanism designed to help us survive in the face of threats. The *"fight or flight"* response, as it is commonly known, activates a cascade of physiological changes, including the release of stress hormones like cortisol and adrenaline. These changes prepare the body to confront or escape from danger, enhancing our physical and mental capabilities temporarily. While this response is vital for our survival, its constant activation in the modern world can lead to a plethora of health issues, both physical and psychological.

MODERN STRESSORS: THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE OF LIFE

In the 21st century, the sources of stress have evolved significantly. Traditional stressors, such as physical threats, have been replaced by more subtle but equally potent triggers. Academic pressures, job demands, financial insecurities, and the relentless pace of technology are just a few examples. Social and cultural factors, including the pressure to conform to societal norms and the pervasive influence of social media, have added new layers of complexity to the stress experience.

THE COLLEGE CRUCIBLE: STRESS AMONG STUDENTS

College students find themselves at the epicentre of this complex web of stressors. The pursuit of higher education, once viewed as a time of personal growth and discovery, now often encompasses academic rigor, financial challenges, and the constant digital presence that can intensify stress levels. The expectations placed on students, both by themselves and by society, can create a perfect storm of stressors, impacting mental and physical health, academic performance, and overall well-being.

CAUSES OF STRESS:

Stress is a complex phenomenon with a wide range of potential causes, both external and internal. It's essential to understand the various sources of stress as they can significantly impact an individual's physical, emotional, and mental well-being.

1. Academic and Work Demands:

One of the most common sources of stress is the pressure to perform academically or professionally. For students, this can include the demands of coursework, exams, and assignments. In the workplace, stress can stem from high workloads, tight deadlines, and job insecurity. It can be extremely daunting to fear failing or falling short of expectations.

2. Financial Pressures:

Financial stress is a major contributor to stress in modern society. Concerns about income, debt, and financial stability can create persistent worry and anxiety. Economic downturns, job loss, and unexpected expenses can exacerbate financial stress.

3. Relationships and Social Pressures:

Conflicts in personal relationships, such as family issues or difficulties with friends, can be significant sources of stress. Social pressures, including the need to fit in, meet societal expectations, or deal with peer pressure, can also contribute to stress.

4. Health Issues and Chronic Illness:

Dealing with health problems, whether one's own or that of a loved one, can be profoundly stressful. Chronic illnesses, long-term medical treatments, and the uncertainty surrounding health conditions can lead to chronic stress.

5. Uncertainty and Lack of Control:

Feeling uncertain about the future or being in situations where one lacks control over outcomes can lead to stress. The human brain often seeks predictability and control, and when these are absent, stress can arise.

6. Trauma and Past Experiences:

Past traumatic experiences, such as abuse, accidents, or loss, can have lasting effects on mental health and contribute to on-going stress.

COPING MECHANISMS: NAVIGATING THE STRESSFUL TERRAIN

As stress permeates modern life, individuals employ various coping mechanisms to navigate its challenges. From mindfulness and relaxation techniques to physical exercise and seeking social support, there are numerous strategies for managing stress effectively.

- **Problem-Solving method:** This approach involves identifying the Sources of stress and taking concrete steps to address it. It includes setting clear goals, breaking tasks into manageable steps, and seeking solutions to the underlying problem. For example, if work-related deadlines are causing stress, a problem-solving approach might involve creating a detailed work plan and setting priorities.
- **Emotional Expression:** Expressing emotions, whether through talking to a trusted friend, writing in a journal, or engaging in creative activities like art or music, can be a valuable coping mechanism. It allows individuals to process and release pent-up feelings, reducing emotional distress.
- **Seeking Social Support:** Sharing stressors and concerns with friends, family, or a support network can provide emotional relief and practical assistance. Social support can come in the form of listening, empathy, advice, or help with tasks.

- **Mindfulness and Relaxation:** Mindfulness practices, such as meditation, deep breathing exercises, and progressive muscle relaxation, help individuals stay present in the moment and reduce anxiety. These techniques promote relaxation and can improve overall well-being.
- **Physical Activity:** Regular exercise is known to have numerous physical and psychological benefits. It releases endorphins, which are natural mood lifters, and can help reduce stress and anxiety. Physical activity also promotes better sleep, which is essential for stress management.
- **Time Management:** Effectively managing one's time and setting boundaries can reduce stress related to work or academic demands. Prioritizing tasks, setting realistic goals, and creating structured routines can be effective time management strategies.
- **Humour and Laughter:** Finding humour in difficult situations and sharing laughter with others can be a powerful coping mechanism. Laughter triggers the release of endorphins, promoting relaxation and a positive mood.
- **Positive Self-Talk:** Changing negative thought patterns and engaging in positive self-talk can be empowering. Replacing self-critical or catastrophic thoughts with more realistic and positive ones can reduce stress and increase resilience.
- **Seeking Professional Assistance:** Consulting a therapist or counselor is a good idea if stress gets too much to handle on your own or doesn't go away after trying self-help techniques. To address underlying difficulties, these specialists can offer therapeutic interventions, support, and direction.

AREA OF THE STUDY:

The targeted population for this study was specifically selected as undergraduate college students from the prestigious School of Excellence in law and Presidency College (41 = 30 Girls + 11 Boys) students. This careful selection was made due to the recognition that these students are particularly susceptible to high levels of stress.

METHOD OF THE STUDY:

This research methodology employed narrative study as it utilizes Google Forms and questionnaires to administer data collection process from the respondents.

SOURCES OF DATA:

Primary Source - Direct Interview, observation and Google forms questionnaire.

Secondary Source - Books, Journals, Articles

LIMITATION AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY:

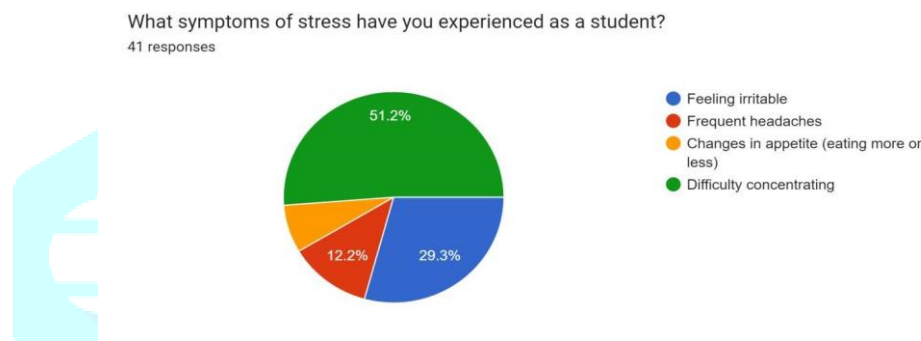
- The present research is inherently cross-sectional, capturing a snapshot of stress experiences at a given point in time. Stress is dynamic and can be influenced by a multitude of factors, making it challenging to capture its full complexity through a single survey.
- Another limitation pertains to the self-report nature of data collection.

- Respondents may under report or over report their stress levels, and there is a potential for recall bias.
- Furthermore, the study focus on college students may limit the generalizability of findings to other demographics. Stress experiences can differ significantly across age groups and life stages as it is due to the reason that the selected respondents are only from (SOEL and Presidency) colleges in the study area.
- Additionally, as with any survey-based research, there may be non-response bias, where individuals who are more or less stressed are more likely to participate, potentially skewing the results.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

1. Symptoms of Stress

Figure: 1



Sources: Primary data

Out of 41 responses from the comprehensive Google form questionnaire, delving into their encounters with stress symptoms, (51.2%) '**Difficulty concentrating**' emerged as the predominant response, trailed by 'feeling irritable,' (29.3%) 'Frequent headache,' (12.2%) and 'changes in appetite'(8.3%).

2. Frequency of stress

Figure: 2



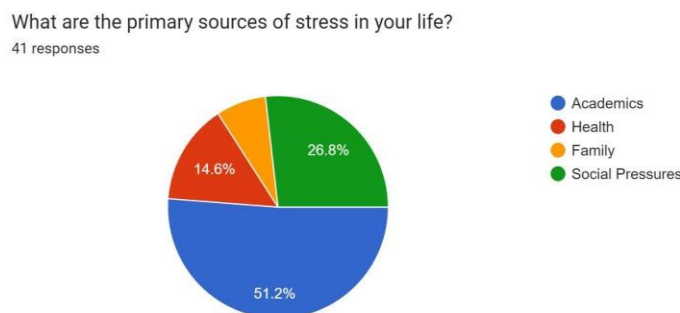
Sources: Primary data

It is evident from the pie chart, More number of the respondents experiences stress only sometimes (46.3%) followed by often (31.7%), rarely(14.6%) and very often (7.3%)

It is clear that more number of respondent feel stresses in often.

3. Primary sources of stress

Figure: 3



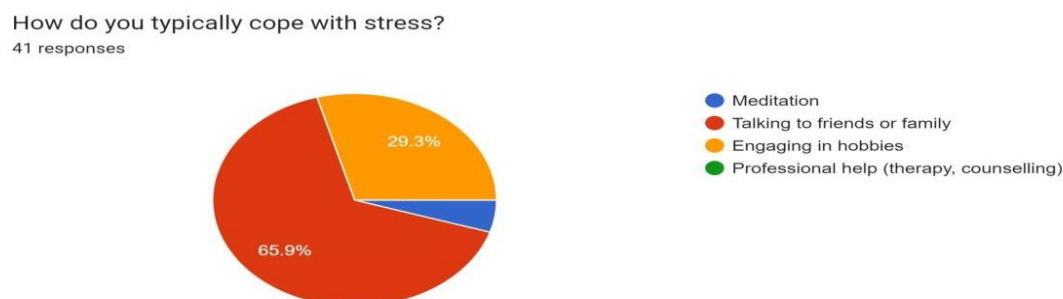
Sources: Primary data

51.2 per cent of the respondents are stressed due to academic pressures followed by 26.8 % of them getting stress because of social stress, 14.6 per cent of respondents are stressed health issues and only 7.3 per cent of them getting stress due to family problems.

Here, more number of the respondents is getting stress sources from their academic pressures.

4. Coping mechanism

Figure: 4



Sources: Primary data

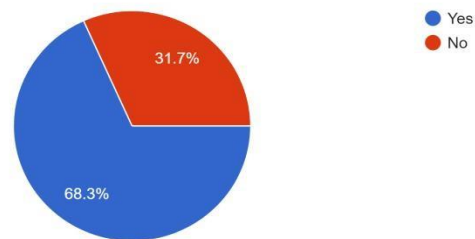
This chart explains how students manage their feelings of being stressed among the selected respondents in the study area.

65.9 per cent of students said that they spend time with family and or friends to help for managing their stress. This was the stated by the respondents in the study area. Followed by 29.3 per cent of students also said that they listen to music for managing their stress and remaining only 4.9 per cent of the respondents engaging their hobbies for managing their stress.

5. Technology and stress

Figure: 5

Do you believe technology and social media contribute to your stress levels?
41 responses



Sources: Primary data

This diagram explains on the relationship between technology and stress, including whether people perceive technology as a contributor to increase their stress levels.

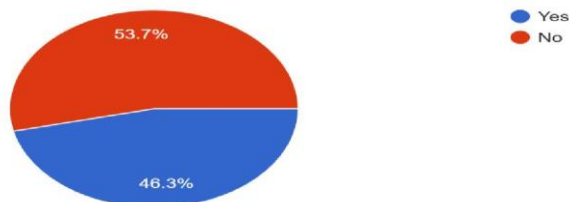
According to the received responses from the study area, more number of respondent feel they are being influenced by technologies and social media, and that contributes to increase their stress, followed by 31.7 per cent of the respondents not agreed to the fact that technology contributes to increase their stress levels.

6.Impact of Stress

Have you experienced any physical or mental health issues as a result of stress?

Figure: 6

Have you experienced any physical or mental health issues as a result of stress?
41 responses



Sources: Primary data

As the response has been quite positive, but still the respondents were asked to answer that kind of physical or mental issues they have come across as a consequence of stress. They are as follows.

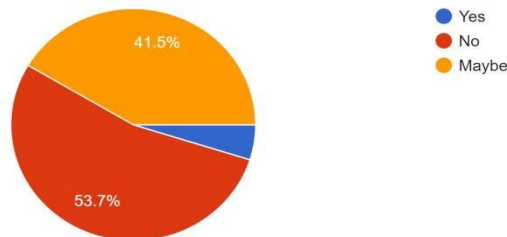
46.3 per cent of the respondents in the study area stated that experienced physical or mental health issues as a result of stress like chest pain, depression, digestion problems, isolating themselves and causes overthinking also, lack of attention, felt a sharp pain in the chest and fainted, tension, mood change, severe headache and continuous hair fall etc.,

53.7 per cent of the respondents in the study area stated that they have not experienced any physical or mental health issues as a result of stress.

7. Support and awareness

Figure: 7

Do you think there is enough awareness and support for managing stress in modern society?
41 responses



Sources: Primary data

Out of the total respondents selected for the study, 53.7 per cent of the m stated that negatively that there is not enough awareness and support for the managing stress in the modern society. Followed by 41.5 per cent of them stated that May be think there is enough awareness and support for managing stress in modern society. And only 4.8 per cent of the respondents state that they think enough awareness and support for managing stress in modern society.

Findings:

- ✓ This survey reveals that a significant percentage of college students experience stress frequently or sometimes. This finding could indicate that stress is a common issue among this demographic.
- ✓ The survey shows that technology and social media play a role in exacerbating stress among college students. The constant connectivity and pressure to maintain an online presence might contribute to stress.
- ✓ Findings reveal that, the coping mechanisms are commonly employed by college students to manage stress. Strategies such as seeking social support, practicing mindfulness, or engaging in physical activity are prevalent.
- ✓ This survey highlights the impact of stress on the mental health of college students. Elevated stress levels are associated with increased rates of anxiety and depression among respondents.
- ✓ This survey uncovers the availability and utilization of support systems and mental health resources in our modern society.

SUGGESTIONS

- Enhancing the instructional strategies and the standard of the on-campus learning environment should receive more focus. In order to assist students in managing their stress and to inform them of the detrimental effects of stress, mentorship and guidance should be made available to them.
- During their academic years, students should also design an efficient time management plan for both study and leisure activities. They should also maintain a healthy lifestyle that prioritizes their physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. Creating a wellness center on campus could aid in lessening the effects of some forms of stress.

➤ In order to lessen the stress that students are under, parents should cooperate. This could be achieved by giving their kids any help they might require. Regularly taking little breaks from work allows one to unwind and focus for extended periods of time. It is vital to establish 'realistic' goals in life and to avoid harboring pessimistic ideas. Maintain healthy sleeping habits to guarantee that you get enough sleep.

CONCLUSION

- ❖ There are numerous social and personal variables that have contributed to students' excessive stress levels. Undergraduates seemed to be less affected by a range of personal, familial, and social variables and more stressed by pressure stemming from course overload and academic evaluation methods. The results showed that undergraduates' primary source of stress was their academic workload.
- ❖ The findings of this study led us to conclude that the level of stress was similar among males and females and concluded that symptoms of depression, anxiety and stress were highly prevalent among undergraduate students. The study further revealed that some of the stressors perceived by students are quite inherent in nature.
- ❖ The survey found that students in the humanities, sciences, and commerce experienced various levels of stress due to their workloads, which also resulted in a lack of time for interests, hobbies, and leisure activities. Because of the extensive curriculum and syllabus, undergraduates face a heavy burden in addition to a shortage of time for completing prescribed coursework.
 - ❖ The level of stress is found more in students who live away from home in hostel or PG's to that live with their parents. College students who live in hostel or PG's face difficulty in accommodating away from home, adjusting with their roommates, journey away from home and paying bills and maintaining budget.
- ❖ The stress due to future uncertainty was similar among students from all years of study. College students worry about their professional future or employment after graduation as well as whether will be able to pursue post-graduation.

REFERENCES:

- Don't Feed the Monkey Mind: How to Stop the Cycle of Anxiety, Fear and Worry – Jennifer Shannon (New Harbinger Publisher, 2017).
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