ACADEMIC STRESS AND ITS IMPACT ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE: A STUDY OF COLLEGE STUDENTS

Basu Dev Garg [*]

Abstract

Normal stress is helpful for individuals to keep them active and productive. But experience of high levels of stress over a prolonged period may cause many mental and physical problems. Stress among college students being an important concept needs to be addressed properly, failing which consequences may be serious. This study is primary data based and it has been collected from college students using Google form. Chi square test has been used to test the significance of hypotheses. This study concludes that problem of money to meet academic expenses was moderate academic stressor and grade /marks in the final exam, study for competitive exams, problem of understanding lectures through online mode, expectations of parents about career goal and poor time management were nearly moderate academic stressors among college students. Academic stress irritates college students, distract them from study and affect their overall academic performance adversely.

Keywords: Academic stress, Career, Stress, Stressor

Introduction

It is estimated that 10–30% of students experience some degree of academic stress during their academic career (Johnson S. 1979). College students experience high stress due to various stressors. Negative or excessive stress can affects health and academic performance adversely. Despite other reasons COVID 19 lockdown is one of the new reasons for academic stress among college students who are at the threshold of career. COVID 19 has forced students to study from their homes through online mode. During this lockdown most of the students were found panicking about their career. Stress is usual part of life. College students experience

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[*]*GC Bilaspur, Himachal Pradesh University (HPU), shimla-5, Email: dr.basugarg@yahoo.com*

stress related to changes in lifestyle, increased workload, new responsibilities, and interpersonal relationships (Ross & Hecker 1999).

Stress is a state of the human body in which people feel psychologically or physically unpleasant. It is our body's reaction towards any pressure caused by many internal and external factors. Anger, frustration, not feeling good, fear, sadness etc. are different symptoms of stress. Parents' expectations from students, academic background, self confidence, personal ability to cope with stress, change of school or college, final grade, availability of economic resources etc. are many identified reasons of academic stress highlighted in different researches. There is no doubt that COVID 19 has affected every sector in the Indian economy without any discrimination. It has forced our economy for large-scale shut down which caused a number of economic and social problems. Our educational sector has also been greatly affected by it. In schools and colleges teaching –learning, training & development, examination and other co-curriculum activities have been altered significantly for the last one and half years. Stress among students is a common phenomenon as they have to compete at every step of their academic career. However, stress is not always bad and has negative consequences. But sometimes it motivates students to exploit their capabilities to perform better to win the competition. Impact of stress depends on the individual response to it and it varies from individual to individual. Since each individual has own personal characteristics and experience that further determine his/her stress management strategy and level of stress. Thus, it is true that the same stressor may affect two persons differently.

Review of Literature

A brief review of literature in the field of stress among students is given as below:

Stress is caused by many reasons comprises of personal difficulties, problem at work or major coercion in particular community. (WHO stress management guide for coping with adversity 2020). Stress is a psychological, mental and physical condition that has both positive and negative consequences depending on its gravity on an individual and his/her coping resources available. In higher institutions of learning excessive academic stress depreciates the progress of academic

development. Students and faculty must identify academic stressors that are behind their academic stress and apply appropriate stress coping mechanisms to deal with the stress (Dickson, Joshua and Mavis 2020). Academic stress in male students is higher than of female students. The urban students' academic stress is higher than rural students (Prabu P. 2015). Academic stress still continues to be a devastating problem affecting a student's mental health and well-being (Reddy &, Thattil 2018).The main source of stress for the students is the inadequacy of right support. There is a standard evaluation procedure which does not give enough scope to the students to experiment and push the boundaries to excel. There are many personal and social factors that lead to stress among students (Jain & Manisha 2018. Education stress has negative impact on learning capacity, physical health, and academic performance. It also affects sleep quality and quantity. Increasing students' stress-management skills and abilities is an important target for change (Pascoe, Hetrick and Parker 2019). Stress among students can be solved by various practices; they need to pay attention to their own well being. The right balance of sleep, food, exercise, work, recreation can easily solve the problems of stress (George 2017). Among management students' curriculum and instruction related factors are largely responsible for stress (86%). Placement related issues followed suit with 63% and assessment related matters at 41% and the team work issues accounted for around 24% (Nandamuri & Gowthami 2011). Anxiety highly contributes to stress among students. Hence, teaching faculty must concentrate on addressing anxiety of students, which will automatically reduce stress among the students (Prabhu and Mohan 2014).

Rationale of the Study

Students are the spine of any nation as they have to uphold the flag of the nation. Many studies reveal that there is correlation between stress and academic performance of the students. Motivated students can exploit their capabilities effectively and contribute to the development of the nation. Stress harms students' academic development and cause loss to the entire nation. Stress among college students being an important concept needs to be addressed properly, failing which consequences may be serious. Thus, present study has been undertaken to identify the academic stressor and their effect on academic performance among college students.

Objectives of the Study

The present research work has been undertaken keeping in view the following broad objectives:

1. To determine the academic stressors among college students.
2. To examine the effect of academic stress on academic performance of college students.
3. To analyze the stress coping methods of college students, their efficacy and satisfaction of college students thereof
4. To study the relationship between selected demographic variables of college students and their opinion towards academic stressors

Hypothesis

In the present study sources of academic stress and their effect on academic performance of college students have been examined with the help of following hypothesis:

Ho1: There is no significance relationship between gender of college students and their opinion towards academic stressors

Ho2: There is no significance relationship between level of study of college students and their opinion towards academic stressors

Ho3: There is no significance relationship between educational stream of college students and their opinion towards academic stressors

Ho4: There is no significance relationship between parents' income level of college students and their opinion towards academic stressors

Ho5: There is no significant association between gender of college students and their opinion towards negative effect of academic stress on their academic performance

Ho6: There is no significant association between level of study of college students and their opinion towards negative effect of academic stress on their academic performance

Ho7: There is no significant association between educational stream of college students and their opinion towards negative effect of academic stress on their academic performance

Ho8: There is no significant association between parents' income level of college students and their opinion towards negative effect of academic stress on their academic performance

Ho9: There is no significant relationship between gender and their satisfaction level towards present stress.

Methodology

The present study was exploratory in nature as it attempts to explore the different academic stressors among college students and its effect on their academic performance. This study is restricted to college students of District Bilaspur in Himachal Pradesh. Both types of data primary as well as secondary have been used in the present study to find the answer of research questions. Primary data has been collected with the help of Google form especially developed for this purpose. Common academic stressors revealed by research studies have been included in questionnaire and response was sought at five point Likert scale. Secondary data has been collected from books, newspapers, magazines, journals and research papers published in this field. The collected data has been presented in tabular form and analyzed with the help of percentage and chi-square test of independence and goodness of fit.

Sampling Plan

Purpose full cum convenient sampling was adopted to collect needed information from the college students. A Google form which was specially developed for this purpose was distributed among college students through whatsapp. On the direction of the directorate of higher education stream wise whatsapp groups of students were already formed at college level, so Google form sent to different college students using their whatsapp numbers in the group. Total responses of 544 students were received, out of them 18 were uncompleted and rejected in preliminary scrutiny. Therefore, a total 526 responses were considered for further analysis. A brief detail of sampling plan is given as below:

- Population: Students pursuing graduation and post graduation in Govt. colleges of district bilaspur in Himachal Pradesh.
- Sampling frame: Students college attendance register
- Sampling unit: UG and PG students
- Size of Sample: 526
- Type of study: Exploratory
- Type of survey: Web survey

- Technique used: Structured questionnaire in Google form

Analysis and Interpretation

In table 1 the demographic profile of the respondents has been described. In order to examine academic stressors among college students and their effect on their academic performance, students of different demographic profiles i.e. gender, educational stream, level of study etc. have been included in the present study. A brief profile of demography of respondents is given as below:

Table Demographic profile of the college students

S. No	Demographic variable	No. of respondents	Percentage
	Gender		
1	Male	304	57.8
	Female	222	42.2
	Total	**526**	**100**
	Level of study		
2	UG	414	78.7
	PG	112	21.3
	Total	**526**	**100**
	Stream		
3	Arts	208	39.5
	Commerce	168	31.9
	Science	123	23.4
	Vocational	27	5.1
	Total	**526**	**100**
	Parent's income (Monthly in Rs.)		
4	Below 15000	328	62.4
	Between 15000-30000	108	20.5
	Between 30000-45000	46	8.7
	Between 45000-60000	23	4.4
	60000 and above	21	4
	Total	**526**	**100**

Source: Data compiled through Google form

In table 2 respondents have been classified on the basis of their aim in life. From the table it is observed that govt. job is the aim of the majority (80.61%) of college students. There were only 5.32% college students who had not decided their aim in life yet.

Table 2 Classification of respondents on the basis of their aim in life

Aim in life	No. of respondents	Percentage
Govt. job	424	80.61
Private job	7	1.33
Own business	39	7.41
Not decided	28	5.32
Other	28	5.32
Total	**526**	**100**

Source: Data compiled through Google form

In table 3 respondents have classified on the basis of their awareness about stress. This table reveals that 82.32% of college students are aware and 4.37% are not aware about stress. On the other hand, 13.31% of college students are indifferent about stress. Thus, it is concluded that the majority of college students are aware about stress.

Table 3 Classification of respondents on the basis of their awareness towards stress

Awareness	No. of respondents	Percentage
Yes	433	82.32
No	23	4.37
May be	70	13.31
Total	**526**	**100**

Source: Data compiled through Google form

In order to answer the research question viz. academic stressors among college students, some statements (mentioned in table 4) were developed around the probable academic stressors and response of college students was sought at five point Likert scale. Students were asked to reveal their honest opinion about these probable academic stressors. After collecting the response of college students about these probable academic stressors it was found that majority of college students are of the opinion that

probable academic stressors mentioned in the table are nearly moderate academic stressors because overall average value about these probable academic stressors (i.e. 2.66) is less than the standard average (i.e. three) at five point Likert scale. The value of skewness is also positive which shows that the response of the majority of respondents is concentrated more toward mean value. Further with respect to particular academic stressor, it was found that the problem of money to meet academic expenses is a moderate academic stressor among college students as the mean value (i.e. 3.0)1 is equal to standard average value (i.e. three) with positive skewness.

Table 4 Opinion of the respondents towards probable academic stressors

S.No	Academic stressor (ACS)	Extremely stressful	Above stressful	Moderately stressful	Slightly stressful	Not stressful	Total	Mean	SK	Chi-square
1	Grade /marks in the final exam	92 (17.49)	56 (10.65)	140 (26.62)	173 (32.89)	65 (12.36)	526 (100)	2.80	0.37	P<0.05
2	Reading/Learning workload	27 (5.13)	29 (5.51)	102 (19.39)	171 (32.51)	197 (37.45)	526 (100)	2.08	0.96	P<0.05
3	Study for internal tests and exams	43 (8.17)	42 (7.98)	130 (24.71)	198 (37.64)	113 (21.48)	526 (100)	2.43	0.69	P<0.05
4	Study for competitive exams	56 (10.65)	66 (12.55)	141 (26.81)	174 (33.08)	89 (16.92)	526 (100)	2.66	0.45	P<0.05
5	Problems of money to meet academic expenses	107 (20.34)	79 (15.02)	133 (25.29)	129 (24.52)	78 (14.83)	526 (100)	3.01	0.10	P<0.05
6	Work and study life balance	26 (4.94)	57 (10.84)	136 (25.86)	195 (37.07)	112 (21.29)	526 (100)	2.41	0.56	P<0.05
7	Completion of assignments/presentations of each teacher at time	31 (5.89)	27 (5.13)	93 (17.68)	161 (30.61)	214 (40.68)	526 (100)	2.04	0.56	P<0.05
8	Problem of understanding lectures through on line mode	85 (16.16)	76 (14.45)	148 (8.14)	148 (28.14)	69 13.12)	526 (100)	2.92	0.23	P<0.05
9	Participation in out-of-class activities	19 (3.61)	33 (6.27)	75 (14.26)	168 (31.94)	231 (43.92)	526 (100)	1.93	1.12	P<0.05

10	Completion of syllabus with in time	38 (7.22)	36 (6.84)	100 (19.01)	164 (31.18)	188 (35.74)	526 (100)	2.18	0.88	P<0.05
11	I feel that my self-confidence is lower than I would to be	30 (5.70)	32 (6.08)	73 (13.88)	177 (33.65)	214 (40.68)	526 (100)	2.02	1.11	P<0.05
12	I experience mood swings and difficulty in making decisions	30 (5.70)	34 (.46)	115 (21.86)	210 39.92%	137 26.05%	526 (100)	2.25	0.83	P<0.05
13	Communication skill (writing and oral)	13 (2.47)	31 (5.89)	98 (18.63)	(190 36.12)	194 (36.88)	526 (100)	2.00	0.90	P<0.05
14	Expectations of parents to meet career goal	89 (16.95)	81 (15.43)	125 (23.81)	129 (24.57)	102 (19.24)	526 (100)	2.85	2.85	P<0.05
15	Poor time management	58 (11.03)	72 (13.69)	135 (25.67)	181 (34.41)	80 (15.21)	526 (100)	2.70	0.42	P<0.05
16	Lecture language problem	22 (4.18)	40 7.60)	116 (22.05)	200 (38.02)	148 (28.14)	526 (100)	2.21	0.76	P<0.05
17	On an average your overall opinion about academic stressor	48 (9.13)	57 (10.84)	168 (31.94)	179 (34.03)	74 (14.07)	526 (100)	2.66	0.46	P<0.05

Source: Data compiled through Google form
Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage

Further regarding Grade /marks in the final exam, study for competitive exams, problem of understanding lectures through online mode and expectations of parents to meet career goal and poor time management, it was observed that these are nearly moderate academic stressors among college students since respective mean values (i.e. 2.80, 2.66, 2.92, 2.85 and 2.70 respectively) are close to standard average value (i.e. three). It shows that these are nearly moderate academic stressor among college students. On the other hand, studying for internal tests and exams, work and life balance, mood swings and difficulty in decision making, and lecture language problems etc. are slightly stressful academic stressors as their mean values are significantly less than standard average i.e. three. The application of the chi-square test reveals that opinion of respondents about probable academic stressors is not equally distributed, since P value is significant at 5% level of significance. So it also supports our conclusion.

From table 5 it is evident that 70.53% of college students feel that stress is not good whereas, 11.22% college students assume that stress is good. On the other hand 18.25% of college students are undecided whether stress is good or bad. Thus, on the basis of this analysis it is concluded that the majority of college students are of the opinion that stress is not good.

Table 5 classification of respondents on the basis of their feeling about stress

Feeling about stress	No. of respondents	Percentage
Good	59	11.22
Not good	371	70.53
Can't say	96	18.25
Total	526	100

Source: Data compiled through Google form

In table 6 an attempt has been made to examine the effect of academic stress on students' academic performance. From the table it is clear that the majority of college students are of the opinion that academic stress does not help them to focus on their study (statement 1 and 6 in table 6). Mean value in both cases (i.e. 2.66 and 2.53) was found less than standard average value (i.e. three) at five point Likert scale. The positive value of skewness also shows that opinion of respondents is distributed more toward mean. It shows that the majority of college students disagree with the statement that so far they have not observed the impact of stress on their academic performance and stress helps them to focus more on their study respectively.

Further regarding statements 2,3,4 and 5 in table 6 it was observed that the majority of college students agree that academic stress irritates them, creates low feeling and distracts from study, decreases sleep quality and affects overall academic performance adversely. The mean value in these cases i.e. 3.46, 3.21, 3.42 and 3.11 respectively is above the standard average value (i.e. three). It means college students are either agreed or strongly agreed about these statements. Negative values of skewness in these cases reveal that the opinion of college students is distributed toward the upper end i.e. agree or strongly agree.

Table 6 Opinion of the respondents towards effects of academic stress on their academic performance

S.No	Impact of stress	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total	Mean	SK	P Value
1	It helps me to focus more on my study	28 (5.32)	151 (28.71)	68 (12.93)	177 (33.65)	102 (19.39)	526 (100)	2.66	0.19	P<0.05
2	It makes me irritate and annoying	45 (8.56)	295 (56.08)	77 (14.64)	79 (15.02)	30 (5.70)	526 (100)	3.46	- 0.87	P<0.05
3	It creates low feeling and distracts me from the study	44 (8.37)	235 (44.68)	82 (15.59)	119 (22.62)	46 (8.75)	526 (100)	3.21	- 0.43	P<0.05
4	Stress decreases my sleep quality	54 (10.27)	284 (53.99)	65 (12.36)	77 (14.64)	46 (8.75)	526 (100)	3.42	- 0.82	P<0.05
5	Stress negatively affects my overall academic performance	47 (8.94)	192 (36.50)	109 (20.72)	131 (24.90)	47 (8.94)	526 (100)	3.11	- 0.22	P<0.05

6	So far I have not observed the impact of stress on my academic performance.	18 (3.42)	106 (20.15)	115 (21.86)	185 (35.17)	102 (19.39)	526 (100)	2.53	0.30	P<0.05

Source: Data compiled through Google form

Further in all cases P value was found significant at 5% level of significance. It concludes that the opinion of college students towards these issues is not equally distributed. Skewness and the chi-square test both support our conclusion that the majority of college students have observed the impact of stress on their academic performance and assume that stress doesn't help them to focus more on their study. Stress irritate them, create low feeling and distract from study, decrease sleep quality and affect overall academic performance adversely

In table 7 an attempt has been made to know about the satisfaction of college students towards their present level of stress. From the table it is noticed that slightly more than half (52.28%) college students are not satisfied with their present level of stress. On the contrary, 27.95% of college students are satisfied with their present level of stress whereas, 19.77% college students are unable to say anything about satisfaction toward present level of their stress.

Table 7 Classification of respondents on the basis of their satisfaction towards present level of stress

Response	No. of respondents	Percentage
Yes	147	27.95
No	275	52.28
Can't say	104	19.77
Total	526	100

Source: Data compiled through Google form

In table 8 efforts have been made to analyze different methods of coping stress among college students. For this purpose some common methods of

coping stress have been included in the questionnaire and response was sought from the college students. From the table it is observed that 64.4% college students listen to music to cope with their stress, followed by 43.3% students who talk with their friends to cope with stress. Further it is found that 32.9% college students do exercise and 32.7% college students prefer sleep to come out from stress. Like this there are 22.8% and 20.3% college students who play physical games and play games on computer or mobile phone or use social media apps to keep stress away. Thus, on the basis of the above analysis it is summed up that listening to music, talking with friends, exercise and playing games (physically or on computer/mobile phone) are some important methods among college students for coping with stress.

Table 8 Classification of respondents on the basis of their methods to cope with stress

Methods	No. of respondents	Percentage
Exercise	173	32.9*
Music	339	64.4
Talking with friends	228	43.3
Play physical Games	120	22.8
Yoga	82	15.6
Meditation	102	19.4
Play computer/ mobile Games/Use social media apps	107	20.3
Sleep	172	32.7
Smoke	5	1
Alcohol	3	0.6
other	60	11.4

Source: Data compiled through Google form

*percentage is taken from total sample size

From table 9 it is concluded that 45.06% college students are partially and 40.87% college students are fully satisfied with their present mechanism to cope with stress.

There were 14.07% college students who were not satisfied with their present mechanism to cope with stress. They require additional treatment

to deal with the present level of their stress. Thus, it is concluded that more than half of college students are not fully satisfied with their present mechanism to cope with stress.

Table 9 Classification of respondents on the basis of their satisfaction towards stress coping methods

Response	No. of respondents	Percentage
Fully satisfied	215	40.87
Partial satisfied	237	45.06
Not satisfied	74	14.07
Total	526	100

Source: Data compiled through Google form

Summary of hypothesis testing is presented in table 10 from this table it is concluded that there is no significant relationship between demographic variables of college students (gender, level of study, stream and parental income) and their opinion towards academic stressors and impact of academic stress on their academic performance. However, there is significant association between gender and their satisfaction level towards present level of stress. College boys are comparatively more satisfied than girl students about their present level of their stress.

Table 10 Summary of hypothesis testing

Null hypothesis	Chi-square value	Level of significance	P value	Comparison	Remark
Ho1: There is no significance relationship between gender of college students and their opinion about academic stressors	3.04693	0.05	0.550002	P>0.05	Accepted
Ho2: There is no significance relationship between level of study of college students and their opinion towards academic stressors	1.96853	0.05	0.741548	P>0.05	Accepted

Ho3: There is no significance relationship between educational stream of college students and their opinion towards academic stressors	19.7574	0.05	0.0718167	P>0.05	Accepted
Ho4: There is no significance relationship between parents' income level of college students and their opinion towards academic stressors	11.7828	0.05	0.758788	P>0.05	Accepted

Ho5: There is no significant association between gender of college students and their opinion towards negative effect of academic stress on their academic performance	1.15005	0.05	0.886253	P>0.05	Accepted
Ho6: There is no significant association between level of study of college students and their opinion towards negative effect of academic stress on their academic performance	1.03418	0.05	0.90457	P>0.05	Accepted

Ho7: There is no significant association between educational stream of college students and their opinion towards negative effect of academic stress on their academic performance	6.09449	0.05	0.911244	P>0.05	Accepted
Ho8: There is no significant association between parents' income level of college students and their opinion towards negative effect of academic stress on their academic performance	16.3142	0.05	0.431253	P>0.05	Accepted

Ho:9 There is no significance relationship between gender and their satisfaction level towards present stress,	7.54126	0.05	0.0230375	P<0.05	Rejected

Source: Data compiled through Google form

Findings of the Study

On the basis of collected data analysis and interpretation the following findings have been extracted:

1. Govt. job is the aim of the majority (80.61%) of college students and 82.32% of college students are aware about stress.
2. Problem of money to meet academic expenses was a moderate academic stressor among college students.
3. Grade /marks in the final exam, study for competitive exams, problem of understanding lectures through online mode, expectations of parents to meet career goal and poor time management were found nearly moderate academic stressor among college students.
4. Further it is observed that study for internal tests and exams; work and study life balance, mood swing and difficulty in decision making, and lecture language problem etc. were found slightly stressful academic stressors among college students.
5. It is concluded from the study that the majority of college students have observed the impact of stress on their academic performance and assumed that stress doesn't help them to focus more on their study. Stress irritates them, creates low feeling and distracts from study, decreases sleep quality and affects overall academic performance adversely.

6. It is concluded that the majority (70.53%) of college students are of the opinion that stress is not good and listening to music, talking with friends; exercise and playing games (physically or on computer/mobile phone) are some important methods among college students for coping with stress.

7. It is also concluded from the study that more than half of college students are not fully satisfied with their present mechanism to cope with stress.

8. From testing of hypotheses it is concluded that there is no significant relationship between demographic variables of college students (gender, level of study, stream and parental income) and their opinion towards academic stressors and impact of academic stress on their academic performance. However, there is significant association between gender and their satisfaction level towards present level of stress. College boys are comparatively more satisfied than girl students about their present level of their stress.

Point of Concern and Suggestions

From the study it is observed that the majority of the college students are of the opinion that stress is not good and more than half of college students are not fully satisfied (either partially satisfied or not satisfied) with their personal mechanism to cope with stress. Moreover, the majority of college students are of the opinion that stress irritates them, creates low feelings and distracts from study, decreases sleep quality and affects overall academic performance adversely. So such students should be given extra attention by their parents at home and by teachers at college level. In this regard some motivational lectures may be given to such students at college level by the concerned faculty member. Despite it, special seminars may be conducted on stress coping methods and strategies at college level ensuring participation of students and faculty members. Finally, student mentoring groups may be formed where students can discuss their academic problems openly without hesitation.

Conclusion

During COVID 19 lockdown classroom teaching and examinations have been replaced with e-mode, which has caused so many problems to govt.,

college administrations, teachers, parents and students. The college students who were at the threshold of career building found panicking about the unforeseen consequences of COVID 19. This study concludes that problem of money to meet academic expenses was moderate academic stressor and grade /marks in the final exam, study for competitive exams, problem of understanding lectures through online mode, expectations of parents to meet career goal and poor time management were nearly moderate academic stressors among college students. Moreover, the majority of college students have observed the impact of academic stress on their academic performance and found that academic stress doesn't help them to focus on their study. Stress irritates them, creates low feelings and distracts them from study, decreases sleep quality and affects overall academic performance adversely. It was also concluded that listening to music, talking with friends; exercise and playing games (physically or on computer/mobile phone) are some important methods for college students to cope with stress and more than half of college students are not fully satisfied with their personal mechanism to cope with stress.

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