

Sources and Effects of Stress among Agricultural University Students

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ABSTRACT

Stress is the physical response of body to a situation where the normal working condition of a person is reduced due to factors such as excess of work, personal life imbalance etc. Under stress, body thinks it is under attack and a complex mix of hormones such as adrenaline, cortisol, etc is released. Thus, stress is an irritating condition. Everyone feels stress from time to time and students, due to their busy schedule, face it the most. University brings a new phase of life to students; it is full of life, enjoyment and zest. But at the same time it brings stress which may be due to different reasons such as heavy work load, academic life of students. In university students face different challenges which they have never seen before thus adding stress and tension to their life such as project completion, deadlines, etc. Apart from the academic life students face stress from other factors also, such as some are not satisfied with their physical appearance such as hair colour, skin colour, height, etc which creates a tense situation in their head leading to stress. Family can be considered as one factor of stress to the students as families with consistent fights have a bad impact on the children. Relationships of students are never too stable, thus lead to stress and even depression. Society is also responsible for stress outbreak in university students. Thus the stress in students cannot be tied to a single factor; it is actually a combination of various situations and factors. Hence, students should be trained with various stress management techniques and stress handling ways so that the stress is reduced to minimum.

Keywords: Stress, management, depression

The definition of stress has changed over the years. Initially it was considered as environmental pressure. Then strain within the person. Stress is a psychological and physical state that results when the resources of the individual are not sufficient to cope with the demands and pressures of the situation. Thus, stress is more likely in some situations than others and in some individuals than others (Michi, 2002). Beehr (1976) defined stress in very general terms as anything about an organizational role that produces adverse consequences for the individual. For most people, stress is a negative

experience. However Lazarus (1991) argued that, stress is a transaction, a dynamic process that keeps on changing according to the role played by stress moderators with the changing external economic and financial environment in different societies. Keinan and Perlberg (1986) revealed that the degree of stress experienced by undergraduate students may differ from non-student peers and from one school year to another. During the first year at the university, undergraduate students have difficulties to assimilate a vast amount of academic material in short period, and they are required to

develop effective study techniques and habits in order to cope with the volume of material assigned to them (Campbell & Svenson, 1992). It has been argued that the first exposure of the undergraduate students to the academic studies and to the highly bureaucratic university administrative procedure can also cause stress, because they have to make necessary adjustment to their social environment as well. Some undergraduate students are often stressed because of interpersonal relationships with peer and they experience considerable difficulty when trying to adjust to the university social network (Shirom, 1986). McKean *et al.* (2000) stated that undergraduate students experience higher stress at predictable times each semester because of the academic commitments, financial pressures, and lack of time management skills. This can affect health, emotional state and academic performance, once stress has become perceived negatively or has become excessive. Hence, it is important that undergraduate students develop effective strategies in order to manage stressful situations. Radcliff and Lester's (2003) carried a study on the perceived stress among final year medical undergraduate students revealed that the most stressful situations for students were the excessive class workload, the socialisation pressure, the lack of guidance, and transition periods of transition. The few studies that specifically relate to the sources of academic stress are rather limited. Therefore, the present study was undertaken to study the main causes of stress in University students; the effect of stress on the performance of students and to find out elements used to remove/reduce the stress.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present research was conducted with the help of schedule/ questionnaire based on the information collected from the students of SKUAST-Jammu. The study was based on descriptive as well as exploratory type of research which involves convenience sampling technique with sample size of 100 respondents. The study used both the primary as well as the secondary data collected through websites, journals related to stress management and, magazines, etc.

After collecting the data the results have been analyzed by using percentage and graphical representation.

$$\text{Percentage} = \frac{x}{y} \times 100$$

Where, x = number of respondents respond

y = total number of respondents

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Personal characteristics of students

The personal characteristics of respondents have been presented in Table 1. The majority of the students belong to the category of 18-22 years, followed by 22-26 years and then above 26 years (Fig. 1). The respondents above 26 years of age were mainly the in-service candidates of agricultural departments. Out of 100 respondents, 61 were male and 39 were female.

Table 1: Demographics of Respondents

Particulars	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
<i>Age</i>		
18-22 years	61	61
22 - 26years	29	29
26 years & above	10	10
Total	100	100
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	61	61
Female	39	39
Total	100	100

Frequency of stressed students

Adolescence is a dangerous period of time where young people experience self-organization and role confusion.

Table 2: Frequency of stressed students

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Stressed	65	65
Not Stressed	35	35
Total	100	100

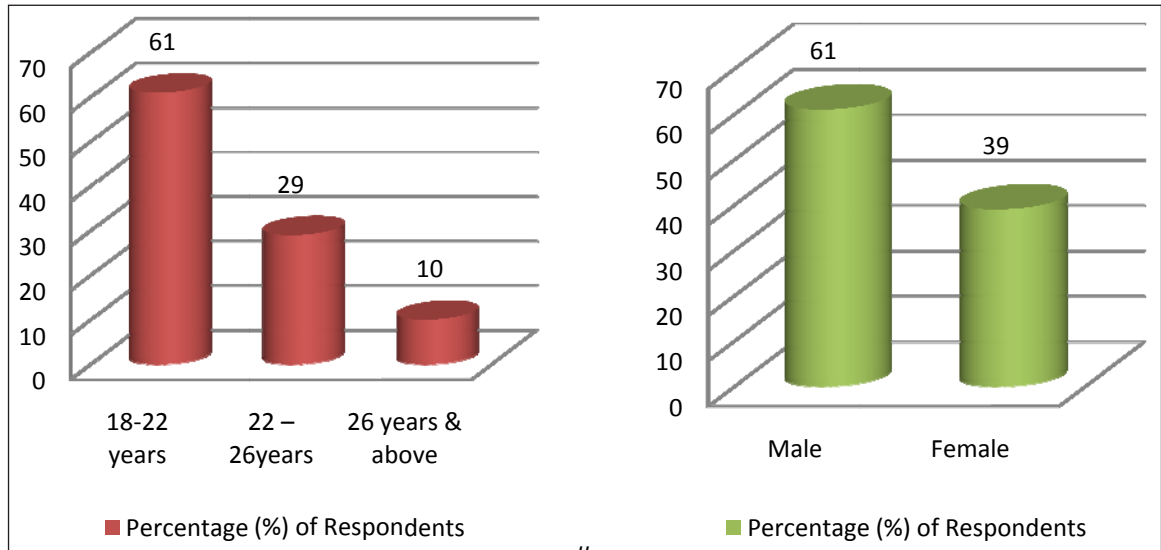


Fig. 1: Personal characteristics of students

For them, stress mainly comes from academic tests, interpersonal relations, relationship problems, life changes, and career exploration. The frequency of stressed students is presented in Table 2. Such stress may usually cause psychological, physical and behavioural problems.

It is clear from the table that out of 100 respondents, 78 were under stress (Fig. 2), however the reasons were diverse.

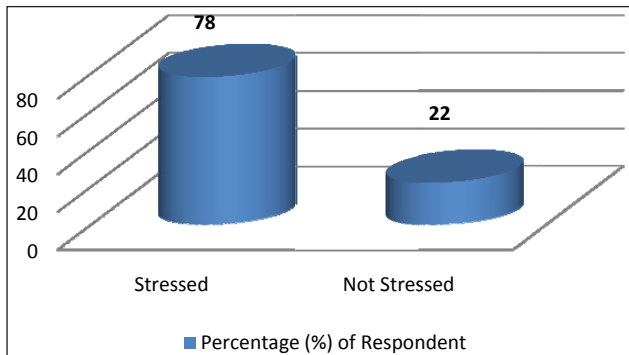


Fig. 2: Stressed among students

Reasons behind stress of students

University life is one of the most scintillating and memorable experience in an adolescents life. It is in University 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. University students are at a critical period

where they will enter adulthood. The reasons behind the stress of students are classified in Table 3.

Table 3: Factors responsible for Stress

Factors	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Lower grade	46	46
Increased class workload	18	18
Many hours of studies	07	07
Lack of university support	09	09
Poor Working Environment	08	08
Examinations	02	02
Long lectures	10	10
Total	100	100

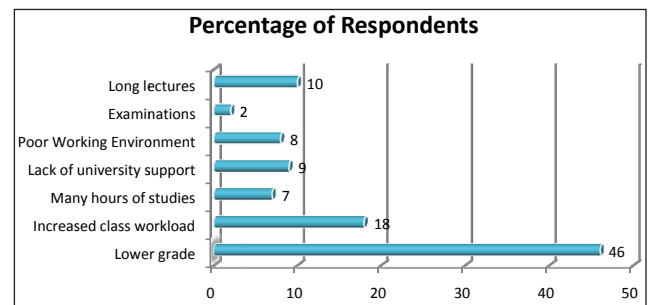


Fig. 3: Factors responsible for Stress

A large number of respondents were stressed because of low grade (46 out of 100), followed by increased class workload (18), long lectures (10) lack of university support (9), poor working environment (8) and hours of study (7). Only 2 respondents were stressed because of examinations (Fig. 3).

Managing stress of students

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 behaviours. The students themselves shared their point of views for managing and reducing stress, which are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Methods and Techniques to Reduce Work Stress

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%) of Respondent
Modification in education environment	31	31
Meaningful Communication	09	09
Meditation/Yoga Practice	10	10
Freedom to Work	15	15
Motivation and Encouragement	25	25
Time Management	10	10
Total	100	100

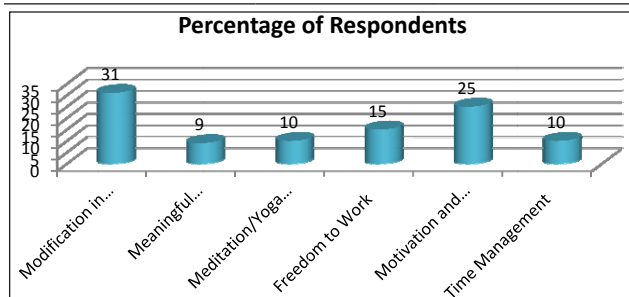


Fig. 4: Methods and Techniques to Reduce Work Stress

Out of 100 respondents, 31 expressed that stress can be reduced by modification in work, 25 stated that motivation is the crucial factor for managing stress. Freedom to work, time management, meditation and yoga and meaningful communication were among the other main factors perceived to be managing stress.

CONCLUSION

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 behavioural problems. The present study examines the sources and effect of stress on University students. It was concluded that the major reasons behind stress of students include low grade, followed by increased class workload, long lectures, lack of university support, poor working environment and long hours of study. The efforts should be made to introduce routine extra-curricular activities at University level to manage the stress of students.

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