

A Comprehensive Analysis of Academic Stress among Students: A Review

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Abstract:- Stress is undeniably a significant term with a profound impact, but it can be effectively addressed through minor adjustments in our daily lives. Stress affects individuals across various professions such as managers, financiers, government officials, administrators, politicians, and housewives. However, it is particularly prevalent among students in today's society. It is crucial to identify the root cause of stress in order to address it meticulously and develop efficient interventions. Stress is always perceived as a subjective process, influenced by an individual's personal analysis and response to a threatening event. It can lead to detrimental conditions such as depression, anxiety, and various other health issues. The increasing number of workshops, articles, and research reports on stress management reflects the growing number of stress-related cases in recent decades. This study focuses on the conceptual framework of stress, the causes of stress among students, and strategies for stress management. Additionally, it provides a comprehensive review of existing literature on the subject.

Keywords:- Impact, Meticulously, Threatening, Hazardous, Stress Management.

I. INTRODUCTION

Stress is a universal aspect of life that impacts various demographic groups regardless of age, gender, education level, or socioeconomic status. However, stress, depression, and anxiety are particularly prevalent mental health issues among college students. The transition to a new campus environment brings about numerous challenges in terms of education, social interactions, environment, and psychological adjustments, which can have an impact on their overall well-being and academic performance. The differences in teaching methods, academic requirements, faculty relationships, and student interactions in tertiary education contribute to the stress experienced by college students as they strive to succeed academically and prepare for their future careers.

Stress can serve as a beneficial and adaptive response to threats, as it mobilizes individuals' energy towards the

stressors (Khan, Lanin, & Ahmad, 2015). It is important to recognize that a certain level of stress is necessary for students, as it motivates them to actively progress in their academic journey, which they would otherwise be uninterested in (Nandamuri & Ch, 2007). Numerous researchers have also acknowledged that stress is not always negative, as it can contribute positively to people's lives. For example, exam stress or academic workload can motivate and empower college students to effectively handle their academic tasks, leading to enhanced academic achievement and creativity (Auerbach & Gramling, 1998). However, if individuals fail to employ effective stress coping mechanisms, their experience of stress can persist over time and increase the risk of developing severe physical and mental problems (Auerbach & Gramling, 1998).

II. BACKGROUND WORK

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) define stress as the physical and psychological response of an individual to an event or object that is perceived as a threat. Similarly, Campbell (2006) as cited in Bataineh (2013) describes stress as a negative reaction that individuals display when they face excessive pressure or demands. Stress particularly arises when individuals find themselves in overwhelming situations and believe that they lack the ability to cope. These definitions highlight stress as a psychophysical phenomenon that emerges from the continuous interaction between an individual and their environment. In other words, when college students, for example, experience the pressures of finding a job or a potential life partner, these stressors alone do not cause anxiety or tension. Instead, the feeling of stress arises from the interaction between the stressors and the students' perception and response to them (Romano, 1992).

According to existing research, it is well-established that college students face various stressors and levels of stress. For example, a study involving 249 student participants revealed that undergraduate university students often experience heightened stress due to academic responsibilities, financial burdens, and difficulties in time management. When students perceive stress negatively or when stress levels escalate, it can significantly impact their

health, emotional well-being, and academic performance (Ranjita Misra & Mckean, 2000). Similarly, Waghachavare, Dhumale, Kadam, and Gore (2013) conducted a survey with a large sample size (N = 1200) and found that college students encounter stress related to healthy lifestyles and academic pressures. More recently, Bhat U et al. (2018) highlighted the prevalence of psychological stress among college students, particularly among engineering and art students, as well as those living with their families.

Ross, Niebling, and Heckert (1999) conducted a study on stress sources, highlighting that daily hassles are more stress-inducing than significant life events. Intrapersonal factors were identified as the primary stressors. Specifically, the research identified changes in sleeping habits, vacations/breaks, alterations in eating habits, increased workload, and new responsibilities as the top five stress sources among college students. Azila-Gbettor, Atatsi, Danku, and Soglo (2015) also found academic, intrapersonal, interpersonal, social, teaching quality, and environmental stressors to be common among business students in Ghana. Environmental stressors were reported as the most significant category. Additionally, high-stress levels in college students were linked to negative self-perception and unhealthy behaviors such as poor diet, lack of exercise, and inconsistent sleep patterns (Walton, 2002).

A different study was conducted at King Saud University, focusing on academic stress among college students in the faculty of education. The findings of this study revealed that students experienced a moderate level of stress due to various factors such as academic overloads, course difficulties, insufficient study time, heavy workload each semester, challenging exams, lack of motivation, and high expectations from their families. The primary source of stress was identified as the fear of failure among students (Bataineh, 2013). While several previous studies have acknowledged the prevalence of stress among college students, the sources and intensity of stress vary across different studies. Although many studies have reported high levels of stress among students, some studies have also found that university students experience a moderate level of stress, anxiety, and depression (e.g., Bataineh, 2013; Bayram & Bilgel, 2008; Thawabieh & Qaisy, 2012).

The impact of gender on stress has been the subject of empirical studies, and the results have been contradictory and varied (Azila-Gbettor et al., 2015). For instance, Sulaiman, Hassan, Sopian, and Abdullah (2009) discovered that female students tend to experience higher levels of stress compared to their male counterparts due to their heightened emotional sensitivity towards their surroundings. Similarly, Jogaratnam and Buchanan (2004) also found that female students reported higher stress levels than males, particularly in relation to time pressure. Furthermore, research has shown that stress and anxiety levels are generally higher among female college students compared to their male counterparts (Bayram & Bilgel, 2008). One possible explanation for this disparity is that women often take on the role of caretaker for their families while simultaneously juggling work and academic success.

Additionally, females tend to impose higher levels of stress on themselves and exhibit more physiological reactions to stressors, whereas males are socialized to display less emotional vulnerability and consequently report lower stress levels.

Numerous research studies have confirmed that there exists a negative correlation between the level of stress experienced by students and their academic achievements. It is widely assumed that higher levels of stress impede students' ability to effectively function in the realm of learning (Bennett, 2003; Elias, Ping, & Abdullah, 2011). A study conducted in India among 656 undergraduate students revealed that students with low academic performance and those with high academic performance exhibited significantly different levels of stress from various sources (Veena & Shastri, 2016). Similarly, Taylor and Owusu-Banahene (2010) reached the conclusion that stress detrimentally affects students' academic performance. Furthermore, stress components such as social and financial stress were also found to have a detrimental impact on students' academic performance (Pariat, Rynjah, & Kharjana, 2014).

Sharma and colleagues (2016) emphasized the importance of utilizing a variety of strategies to manage stress. Engaging in regular physical activity can effectively alleviate stress levels. Additionally, students can benefit from utilizing time management techniques and participating in leisure activities. Furthermore, creating a supportive environment within colleges is recommended to reduce stress. Implementing changes in teaching delivery methods and offering mentorship can also enhance the overall teaching approach.

Based on the literature reviewed, it appears that numerous studies support the negative impact of stress on students. Nevertheless, there are studies that question the correlation between stress and academic performance, suggesting that stress can actually have a beneficial effect on students' learning outcomes. For example, Siraj et al. (2014) investigated the link between stress levels and academic achievements, revealing that individuals with high levels of stress tended to have a higher cumulative grade point average. Medical students were particularly adept at managing their stress effectively, leading them to refute the idea that stress negatively affects their academic performance. Conversely, some studies have failed to find a statistically significant connection between stress and academic performance (Azila-Gbettor et al., 2015; Jogaratnam & Buchanan, 2004).

III. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The transition from high school to college can be an incredibly stressful experience for students. It can lead to psychological, academic, and social challenges. The teaching methods, class sizes, financial responsibilities, competition, and relationships with peers and teachers are all very different in college compared to high school. Additionally, the academic demands in college can feel

overwhelming and intimidating. Scott (2009) has also noted that college students face a significant amount of stress and must constantly adapt their coping strategies. These stressors arise from both internal and external factors, making the college learning environment complex. Students are expected to thrive academically, overcome financial hardships, navigate uncertain futures, and address societal issues and opportunities. College is also a place where students often form relationships and partnerships for the future. Furthermore, students are required to excel in homework and exams across various subjects and disciplines, which can further contribute to the pressure they feel. If students are unable to effectively manage these demands, stress can lead to anxiety, substance abuse, depression, and other mental health issues. Elevated stress levels among students can have negative effects on both their academic performance and overall well-being.

IV. FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO STRESS IN STUDENTS

Academic demands have been on the rise in recent years, with students having to juggle examinations, assignments, and various other activities. In addition to the workload, both teachers and parents also impose high expectations on students to achieve good grades. These pressures drive students to work tirelessly, ultimately leading to increased stress levels. Alongside academics, there is also a push for students to engage in extracurricular activities, creating a need for them to excel in all areas. The lack of adequate counselling resources further adds to the confusion, leaving students struggling to make informed career choices despite their rigorous study routines. The demanding nature of parents and teachers can leave students feeling overwhelmed and burdened by stress.

Adolescence and secondary education play a crucial role in moulding a young person's character and perspective on life. Peer pressure is a term commonly associated with teenagers, encompassing behaviors such as encouraging others to engage in drinking, smoking, cheating, lying, and more. The impact of peer pressure can be both harmful and influential, either positively shaping the personalities of introverted students or creating obstacles that result in stress. It is essential for students to exercise wisdom and choose to surround themselves with positive influences in order to navigate peer pressure in a constructive manner.

The heavy burden of academic responsibilities and the constant pressure to meet deadlines can be overwhelming. Parents pushing their children to excel in both studies and extracurricular activities are at an all-time high. The intense focus on academic success, often taken to extremes, can damage self-esteem and is a leading cause of stress, failure, and mental breakdowns. The competition among parents to showcase their child as a well-rounded individual often backfires, leaving them feeling like victims rather than achievers. The lack of support from parents and teachers is a significant factor contributing to student stress, as the absence of meaningful interactions only adds to the doubts and confusion that students may already be facing. With so

much expected of them, children can feel adrift and without guidance due to the absence of proper support.

V. STRESS CONTROL METHODS

Stress has the potential to become overwhelming for many teenagers, often resulting in feelings of sadness. According to a study conducted by NYU, a significant portion of stress experienced by high school students originates during their school years. This stress tends to carry over into college, leading to academic struggles and potential mental health issues. Upon entering college, students are faced with new and increased workloads, the pressure to make friends and fit in socially, and the challenge of navigating a more complex network without the same level of parental support. Therefore, it is crucial for students to develop effective stress management skills in order to successfully navigate these challenges and thrive.

There exist numerous methods that students can utilize to alleviate stress, such as engaging in a regular exercise routine. This simple adjustment can greatly contribute to creating an atmosphere of lasting happiness. Incorporating meditation and breathing exercises can also help students manage stress during exams and prevent panic. Additionally, ensuring that students get an adequate amount of sleep can improve their patience and enhance their learning capabilities. Music has a therapeutic effect, whether listened to during times of stress or not. Listening to music can offer various benefits and effectively reduce stress. The way individuals communicate with themselves significantly impacts their attitude, therefore practicing positive self-talk is crucial in fostering a harmonious environment.

VI. CONCLUSION

The primary cause of stress among students stems from the insufficient support they receive. The current evaluation process lacks the necessary flexibility for students to explore and surpass their limits in order to excel. Numerous personal and societal factors contribute to the stress experienced by students. The absence of clear guidance and access to proper career counselors results in aimless goals, leaving graduates uncertain about their future prospects and feeling insecure about finding employment. The academic workload, involvement in extracurricular activities, and the burden of assignments have escalated to an unprecedented level. Parents place immense pressure on their children to participate in a competitive race and outperform their peers, all in an effort to elevate their own social standing within society.

Running after achievements has become a trend in today's highly competitive world, a harsh truth but a reality. Each child is unique, so it is crucial for parents to help their children understand the significance of recognizing their strengths and motivating them to pursue a career in their area of expertise. It is essential to follow your passion or develop a passion for what you do. Efficient time management and incorporating at least one physical activity

into daily routine can help reduce stress, enhance focus, and ultimately lead to academic success.

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