Stress of Students: Among the Educational Institute (A Study on Students)

KEYWORDS

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ABSTRACT *The objective of this study is to explore the components of academic stress among the post graduate management students. The study further tries to make an in-depth investigation into each component of academic stress such as curriculum and instruction, team work related issues, assessment, and placement, to identify the micro issues that are causing stress. The sample comprises of 500 postgraduate management students from various management institutes spread across the Warangal district of Andhra Pradesh in India. Data was collected through self designed academic stress questionnaire based on previous models available.*

INTRODUCTION

Stress is a necessary and unavoidable concomitant of daily living-- necessary because without some stress we would be listless and apathetic creatures ,and unavoidable because it relates to any external event, be it pleasurable or anxiety producing.

A person's response towards stress depends on whether an event is appraised as a challenge or a threat (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Challenging stimulus can lead to positive outcomes such as motivation and improved task performance while threatening ones or distress can result in anxiety, depression, social dysfunction and even suicidal intention.

Along with the improvements during the scientific era and the rapid development of information, competitiveness among people has become increasingly intense, as a consequence, people have become busier and, therefore, stress is a natural consequence. Even though appropriate stress is a juncture for self-growth, it is also a motivation for people to progress actively. It not only affects our thoughts and feelings but our behavioural models, as well. However, overstress causes problems and discomfort, and can have serious effects on people. Specifically, student faces the stress when they enter a completely new world of professional education.

Stress has become an important topic in academic circles. Many scholars in the field of behavioral science have carried out extensive research on stress and its outcomes and concluded that the topic needed more attention (Agolla, 2009). Stress in academic institutions can have both positive and negative consequences if not well managed (Stevenson & Harper, 2006). Academic institutions have different work settings compared to nonacademic and therefore one would expect the difference in symptoms, causes, and consequences of stress (Chang & Lu, 2007). It is important to the society that students should learn and acquire the necessary knowledge and skills that will in turn make them contribute positively to the development of the general economy of any nation. It is important for the institutions to maintain well balanced academic environment conducive for better learning, with the focus on the students'personal needs. Students have different expectations, goals, and values that they want to fulfill, which is only possible if the students' expectations, goals, and values are integrated with that of the institution (Goodman, 1993).

TYPES OF STRESS
ACADEMIC STRESS

Academic stress among students have long been researched on, and researchers have identified stressors as too many assignments, competitions with other students, failures and poor relationships with other students or lecturers (Fairbrother & Warn, 2003). Academic stressors include the student's perception of the extensive knowledge base required and the perception of an inadequate time to develop it (Carveth et al, 1996). Students report experiencing academic stress at predictable times each semester with the greatest sources of academic stress resulting from taking and studying for exams, grade competition, and the large amount of content to master in a small amount of time (Abouserie, 1994). When stress is perceived negatively or becomes excessive, students experience physical and psychological impairment. Methods to reduce stress by students often include effective time management, social support, positive reappraisal, and engagement in leisure pursuits (Murphy & Archer, 1996). The only scientific research that specifically related leisure satisfaction to academic stress was that of Ragheb and McKinney (1993) who established a negative association between academic stress and leisure satisfaction.

Institutional level stressors are overcrowded lecture halls, semester system, and inadequate resources to perform academic work (Awino & Agolla, 2008). The pressure to perform well in the examination or test and time allocated makes academic environment very stressful (Erkutlu & Chafra, 2006). This is likely to affect the social relations both within the institution and outside which affects the individual person's life in terms of commitment to achieving the goals (Fairbrother & Warn, 2003). Knowing the causes of students stress will make the educational administrator know how to monitor and control the stress factors that are responsible for the students' stress. Often, graduate students perceive that faculty exert great power over their lives and feel that they live in a state of substantial powerlessness (Altbach, 1970). Another source of stress is the difficulty of achieving social intimacy. It is difficult to find a mate or maintain a relationship with an existing one. Graduate students tend to lack the time and/or the opportunity to develop interpersonal relationships (Hartshorn, 1976). Fear of academic failure related to these tasks is a definite stressor (Kolko, 1980). Thus, stressors affecting students can be categorized as academic, financial, time or health

related, and self- imposed (Goodman, 1993). Academic stressors include the student's perception of the extensive knowledge base required and the perception of an inadequate time to develop it ((Carveth et al, 1996). Students report experiencing academic stress at predictable times each semester with the greatest sources of academic stress resulting from taking and studying for exams, grade competition, and the large amount of content to master in a small amount of time (Abouserie, 1994).

College students have many obstacles to overcome in order to achieve their optimal academic performance. It takes a lot more than just studying to achieve a successful college career. Different stressors such as time management and social activities can all pose their own threat to a student's academic performance. The way that academic performance is measured is through the ordinal scale of grade point average (GPA). A student's GPA determines many things such as class rank and entrance to graduate school. Much research has been done looking at the correlation of many stress factors that college students' experience and the effects of stress on their GPA. Hatcher and Prus (1991) referred to these stress factors as academic situational constraints. Their study took into account a variety of factors that can diminish a student's academic performance. An undergraduate study done by Neumann et al (1990) concludes that college students may in fact experience the burnout phenomenon due to learning conditions that demand excessively high levels of effort and do not provide supportive mechanisms that would facilitate effective coping.

In a higher learning institutions where the demands placed on students are based on deadlines and pressure for excelling in tests or examination, the students are likely to be the victims of stress. This highlights the need for research to examine the sources of academic stress faced by students at various management institutions. With such knowledge, educationists will be able to pay more attention to the sources of academic stress of students and the use of counseling measures to assist students in the sound development of their bodies and mind.
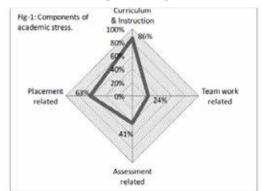
STRESS AMONG MANAGEMENT STUDENTS
As the management education is an important medium that facilitates improvement of leadership qualities and turns out excellent future managers, which is quite evident. Students entering into the professional education needs to face many challenges to which they have never been exposed earlier. The pressure to earn good grades and to earn a degree is very high (Hirsch & Ellis, 1996). Other potential sources of stress include excessive homework, unclear assignments, and uncomfortable classrooms (Kohn & Frazer,1986). In addition to academic requirements, relations with faculty members and time pressures may also be sources of stress (Sgan-Cohen & Lowental, 1988). It is important to the society that students should learn and acquire the necessary knowledge and skills that will in turn make them contribute positively to the development of the general economy of any nation. Do these situations really cause problems and academic stress? Do the differences in learning methods and teachers' teaching methods, in addition to the assignments, tests , project and course selection, cause academic stress in students?

THAT DIFFERENT COMPONENTS OF ACADEMIC WORK RESULTS IN STRESS AMONG MANAGEMENT STUDENTS.
The responses indicate that, among the identified four components of academic work, a large majority (86%) of the management students felt that daily class work is resulting in stress among them. The next component of academic stress is related to placement activity since around 63% of the respondents have given second priority to this factor. Assessment aspect of the academics is given third priority by 41% of the management student. Another component of academic work – group assignments, was treated fourth on priority scale by around 24% of the students. Hence it is clearly evident that the four identified components of academic work are responsible for academic stress among the management students. In this context, the study further tries to analyse different sub issues of each of the above components to gain an in depth knowledge about the specific sources of stressors in an academic setting of a management institute. scale by around 24% of the students. Hence it is clearly evident that the four identified components of academic work are responsible for academic stress among the management students. In this context, the study further tries to analyze different sub issues of each of the above components to gain an in depth knowledge about the specific sources of stressors in an academic setting of a management institute.
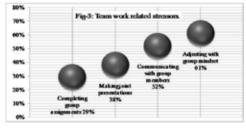

Fig-1: Components of academic stress.

CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION RELATED STRESSORS
Curriculum and instruction form the basis for the academic activity. Any institution or any course cannot fulfill the academic requirements without the predetermined curriculum and structured instruction. Each course has a minimum requirement of instruction hours of the specified curriculum. Hence class work is an integral part of any academic endeavour. There is no substitute for class work in academics. Moreover, class work forms the main body of the course. Students have to participate in the curriculum and instruction process by attending the regular class work and fulfill the class work requirements in the form of completion of assignments, reading and understanding the specified topics, complying with the minimum attendance requirements, completing the group tasks compulsory for assessment and so on. Any student of academics, at whatever level of study he/she may be, must fulfill these requirements to complete the course. Naturally, such well structured academic That some issues of curriculum and instruction form the basis for stress among students. The open ended responses received resulted in an exhaustive list of twelve factors that cause stress regarding curriculum and instruction aspect of academic stress. The issues of regularly attending classes to comply with the minimum attendance requirements and achieving academic goals are the major factors of academic stress among the management students as above 60% of the students have given first and second preferences respectively. The next dominant sub issues of academic stress were choosing specialization (56%) and handling class work (54%) followed by the issues of the amount of material to study and studying for tests and exams which attracted above 40% responses. Further the sub issues like participating in oral presentations fear of failing

or lagging behind others in some subjects, writing essays and assignments, and contribution to class discussion were noteworthy since they were given weightage by above 20% of the sample group. Some important aspect of academic stress. Since the students hailing from different places, religions, cultures and societies are admitted into an institution. Once they are part of the class, the formal groups are made by the faculty or administration for inculcating the spirit of team work culture among the more sub components resulting in academic stress were learning all the material and keeping pace with regular learning. Some other issues which were mentioned by a meager percentage of the respondents were omitted from the discussion.

TEAMWORK RELATED STRESSORS

At the student stage it is felt that mixing with the randomly made formal teams for the sake of group assignments and presentations is an students. Definitely these formal grouping is not done on the basis of habits, preferences, and the individual likes and dislikes. Thus, there is a great scope that this may be a potential stressor in academics specifically in the case of management students. The study attempted to explore the sub issues of group work aspect which serve the sources of academic stress among the management students. Among the four factors provided for prioritizing by the sample group, the issue of adjusting with the group mindset was opted to be the dominant factor by 60% of the sample group. The next preference was given to the issue of communicating with the team members as well as the class members (52%) followed by making joint presentations with 38%. Around 30% of the students said that completing group assignments was another source of stress among them. This clearly indicates that students, faculty and the academic administrators have to concentrate on imparting group skills without allowing the students prone to stress.

ASSESSMENT RELATED STRESSORS

Assessment is a central element in the overall quality of teaching and learning in higher education. Well designed assessment sets clear expectations, establishes a reasonable orkload and provides opportunities for students to self-monitor, rehearse, practice and receive feedback. Assessment is an integral component of a students' general attitudes towards studying. Students often explained negative attitudes in terms of their experiences of excessive workloads or inappropriate forms of assessment. The experience of learning is

made less satisfactory by assessment methods which are perceived to be inappropriate ones. High achievement in conventional terms may mask this coherent educational experience. The repertoire of assessment methods in use in higher education has expanded considerably

in recent years. New assessment methods are developed and implemented in higher education, for example: self and peer assessment, portfolio assessment, simulations, and Overall assessment. The latest constructivist theories and practices go together with a shift from a 'test' or 'evaluation' culture to an 'assessment' culture (Birenbaum, 1996). The students' per-

ceived assessment requirements seem to have a strong relation with the approach to learning a student adopts when tackling an academic task. Similar findings emerged from the Lancaster investigation (Ramsden, 1981) in relation to a whole series of academic tasks and also to dissatisfaction and also hide the fact that students have not understood material they have learned as completely as they might appear to have done. Zeidner (1987) found that multiple choice type exams are generally perceived more favourably than essay type items along most dimensions of the inventory (i.e. perceived difficulty, anxiety, complexity, success expectancy, feeling at ease), by both boys and girls. Furthermore, it was found that students perceive essay type exams to be somewhat more appropriate than multiple choice exams for the purpose of reflecting one's knowledge in the subject matter tested. Assessment is therefore a potent strategic tool for educators with which to spell out the learning that will be rewarded and to guide students into effective approaches to study. Equally, however, poorly designed assessment has the potential to hinder learning or stifle curriculum innovation. But designing assessment to influence students' patterns of study in positive ways can present significant challenges. In this context, the study aims at finding the sub factors which were causing the academic stress among the management students. Meeting the deadlines of assessment serves the principle source (82%) of stress

followed by lack of clarity of the assessment model (72%). Around 66% of the students were apprehensive about the high weight age components of the assessment. Getting good grades through the assessment process was the cause of worry for about 50% of the students hereas around 40% were worried about sitting for the tests. Thus the above five sub issues of assessment are the apparent stressors for management students.

PLACEMENT RELATED STRESSORS

Placement of the management students with the fast growing private sector companies is a recent phenomenon. In fact, many of the students join management courses with an intention to achieve better placement with good corporate. The institutes also are working towards eeting the needs of their students. Hence, due to the importance given to this aspect, the researchers are forced to include this aspect as a potential source of academic stress among the students of management course. Many a time students are worried about their future placement. Naturally this worry rises to the level of anxiety and results in stress among many students. Hence, the study attempted to find out the sub issues of placement aspect responsible for creating stress among the management students. Facing the placement interview itself was the dominant stressor for the sample group as around 90% expressed the same. Many people want to work in the locations of their preferences. As a result, the issue of job location was the second level stressor for around 50% while the job profile serves as a third preference stressor for about 30% of the sample group.

REVIEW OF LITE RATURE

Types of role stress present among the engineering and management students in India was explored in a study conducted by Rakesh Kumar Agarwal and Shailendra Singh Chahar (2007). Role overload, role stagnation and self-role distance were found to be the major stressors experienced by the students. Male students experienced more role stagnation than females. The results did not show any significant differences on any of the role stressors between first year students and their seniors, or between management and engineering students. The results of this study are helpful in understanding the social and educational environment prevailing in the country.

Teachers often emphasize the acquisition of knowledge, so they often neglect the emotional feelings of students during the teaching process, which can cause emotional stress and learning problems for students. In addition, students may feel unfamiliar situations like nervousness, worry frustration, abasement, depression, etc. The instability of these emotions easily initiates unusual behavior, which then affects the learning achievements and adjustment ability of students if appropriate timely counseling is not given by the institutions, teachers and parents, or if they cannot obtain appropriate concern from their peers or siblings (Chen et al, 2006).

Rao K and D K Subbakrishna (2006) of National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS) conducted an appraisal of stress and coping behavior, on a group of 258 male and female undergraduates.

Piekarska (2000) pointed out that the essential factors for the formation of stress are frequent and strong. There is a related connection between the results of stress and psychological and personality characteristics.

'College Chronic Life Stress Survey' constructed by Towbes and Cohen (1996) focuses on the frequency of chronic stress in the lives of college students. This scale contains items that persist across time to create stress, such as interpersonal conflicts, self-esteem problems, and money problems. These stressors were evaluated in relation to the number of times, a student had to deal with them on a weekly basis. It was found that with regard to chronic stress, first-year students scored higher than other students. Rocha-Singh (1994) have examined sources of stress among undergraduates through similar studies.

According to Hirsch and Ellis (1996), the dynamic relationship between a person and the environment, in stress perception and reaction, is especially magnified in college students. The problems and situations encountered by college students may differ from those faced by their non-student peers.

The most significant academic stressors reported were items that are time-specific or subject specific which supports Carroll's (1963) contention that learning is a function of time allowed, aptitude, quality of instruction and ability to understand instruction. These core academic stressors were found to be relatively unchanged over time, as observed by Murphy and Archer (1996) who compared the academic stressors of their previous study with those experienced eight years later (Archer & Lamnin, 1985).

Past research found that collegiate stressors included: academics, social relationships, finances, daily hassles (for example, parking and being late) and familial relationships (Larson, 2006). Within each domain conflict, insufficient resources, time demands, and new responsibilities had characterized stress.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY
An initial approach in stress management is often an analysis of the stressors, or events that have caused stress (Holmes & Rahe, 1967). In this regard, this study tries to identify the sources that resulted in stress for management students in various institutions spread across Warangal District of the state of Andhra Pradesh.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
OBJECTIVES
1. The principle objective of the study is:
2. To find out the components of academic stress experienced by management students.
3. To analyze the curriculum and instruction related com-

ponents responsible for stress.
4. To explore the team work related aspects creating stress among management students
5. To know the assessment related factors of academic stress.
6. To find out the placement related issues causing stress among management students.

HYPOTHESES
This study begins by assuming the following five hypotheses regarding the academic stress among the postgraduate management students. The assumptions are as follows.

1. That different components of academic work results in stress among management students.
2. That some issues of curriculum and instruction form the basis for stress among students.
3. That the team related work environment creates stress among management students.
4. That the assessment system is a cause of stress among management students.
5. That the placement activity contributes for stress among management students.

SAMPLE
Due to the limitations of human power and time, the sample was limited to 50 graduate and Post Graduate Management students from mnnit college, India

Descriptive Analysis
Physical dissatisfaction
TABLE -1

Correlations			Due to difficult assessment	Due to easy assessment	Due to make good grades	Due to short attendance	Due to parents demanded
Due to difficult assessment	Pearson Correlation	1	.107	-.043	.158	.014
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.539	.808	.364	.936
	N	35	35	35	35	35
Due to easy assessment	Pearson Correlation	.107	1	.341*	.342*	.456**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.539		.045	.044	.006
	N	35	35	35	35	35
Due to make good grades	Pearson Correlation	-.043	.341*	1	.241	.363*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.808	.045		.163	.032
	N	35	35	35	35	35
Due to short attendance	Pearson Correlation	.158	.342*	.241	1	.641**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.364	.044	.163		.000
	N	35	35	35	35	35
Due to parents demanded	Pearson Correlation	.014	.456**	.363*	.641**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.936	.006	.032	.000	
	N	35	35	35	35	35
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).						

TABLE-2

Correlations

		Break up of close relationship	Divorce of parents	Arguments between parents, with parents	Loss of parents	Due to unpredicted future
Break up of close relationship	Pearson Correlation	1	-.143	.222	.051	-.016
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.414	.200	.771	.929
	N	35	35	35	35	35
Divorce of parents	Pearson Correlation	-.143	1	.290	.010	-.002
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.414		.092	.954	.993
	N	35	35	35	35	35
Arguments between parents, with parents	Pearson Correlation	.222	.290	1	.402*	.274
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.200	.092		.017	.111
	N	35	35	35	35	35
Loss of parents	Pearson Correlation	.051	.010	.402*	1	.355*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.771	.954	.017		.036
	N	35	35	35	35	35
Due to unpredicted future	Pearson Correlation	-.016	-.002	.274	.355*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.929	.993	.111	.036	
	N	35	35	35	35	35

*. Correlation is significant at the 0. 2-tailed).

Result-It is only significant but not highly significant at 0.01 level with values 0.017, 0.036

RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

The results of the study are discussed hereunder. The components of academic stress: Not surprisingly, much of the academic stress at graduate level is related to what students learn and how they learn it. There's a lot of pressure for the present generation management students to learn more and more than in past generations. Just as it can be stressful to handle a heavy and challenging workload, some students can experience stress from regular academic work that isn't difficult enough. For the purpose of the present study, the components of academic activity are identified as – curriculum and instruction; team work; assessment; and placement. The present study attempts to find out which of these aspects are creating stress among management students. As academic stress was found to be more prominent among the students of professional courses by many research studies, this study primarily concentrated on exploring the micro issues of different components of academic activity in the professional course work setup. The components of academics, in general, are curriculum and instruction, team work, assessment and placement. Among these components, curriculum and instruction aspects were found to be largely responsible for stress (86%) among the management students. Placement related issues followed suit with 63% and assessment related matters at 41% and the team work issues accounted for

around 24%. Further, the in depth analysis of each component of the above resulted in identifying various micro issues responsible for stress among the management students. The study could list out twelve sub issues related to curriculum and instruction component of academic stress ranging from regular attendance for the class work (68%) and achieving academic goals (64%) to keeping up with regular reading (19%) and learning all material at 16%. Among the team work related stressors, adjusting with the group mind set was given high score by 61% of the students followed by communicating with the members of the group (52%). Meeting deadlines of assessment was the highest stressor (82%) among the issues of assessment. Other major issues responsible were lack of clarity (72%), high weightage components (66%), and getting good grades (62%). When it comes to the aspect of placement related issues, 88% of the sample felt that acing interview was the cause of stress whereas around 50% gave next priority to the pay package and job location issues. To summate it can be identified that sub issues of each component of academic stress prevail among the postgraduate management students, this study could provide better insights to the academic administrators for initiating efforts to reduce the intensity of academic stress.

LIMITATIONS

1. Only students participated in the study and that too of only certain age groups.
2. All data collection was by questionnaire and no interviews of students occurred.

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