



Impact of stress on college students: An empirical study

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Abstract

The present study attempted to contribute to the existing research on various factors of stress level by considering girl students (undergraduate and post graduate). A sample of 156 students consisted of 92 undergraduate which contributed 59% to the total sample and 64 post graduate which contributed 41% of the total sample. Independent sample t-test was used by the researchers to test the sample. The results from the analysis indicates that there is a significant difference between the undergraduate and post graduate students in the career and academic stress, easy going personality and apprehensive behavior. Moreover irritability, stress prone tendencies, low level of stress management skills, negative mood state, meaningless thought, physical symptoms of stress and generalized stress have no significant difference between undergraduate and post graduate students.

Keywords: undergraduate, post graduate, independent t-test, stress

Introduction

Stress is found in all aspects of life. Selye, H (1936) ^[4] defined stress as the nonspecific response of the body to any demands made upon it. It is considered to be an internal state or reaction to anything we consciously or unconsciously perceive as a threat, either real or imaginary. Stress can evoke feeling of frustration, fear, conflict, hurt, anger, sadness, inadequacy, guilt, loneliness or confusion.

Individuals under too little stress may not make enough effort to perform at their best level, while those under too much stress often are unable to concentrate or perform effectively and efficiently.

Too much stress can result in physical, psychological and behavioral responses. It adversely affects all parts of the body. The cardiovascular system (heart and blood circulation system) apart, stress impacts the endocrine system; the gastrointestinal system and the immune system. Stress causes high blood pressure that raises risk of heart disease and stroke, increases acid secretion in the stomach that may cause ulcerative colitis and irritable bowel syndrome, suppresses the immune system to increase the susceptibility for colds and other infectious diseases, aggravates allergies such as asthma, causes anxiety and depression that raise risk of addictions such as smoking, alcohol and drugs.

However, stress is subjective and people react to it in different ways. Some adapt while others tolerate to avoid it. Each life stage with its unique developmental tasks and roles and is associated with distinct factors that predict distress. Student life has been found to be a crucial stage in life. Changing familial and social expectations, along with the task of forming stable patterns of relating to others, interact in complex ways to make this a stressful period.

Student experience high stress due to academic commitment, financial pressure and lack of time management skills. These problems can lead to academic failure, family conflicts, drug

abuse, violence and suicide and thus can be very costly to families.

Recognizing the early signs of stress and doing something about it, can improve the quality of their present and future life.

In the present study researchers examined the stress level of students (undergraduate and post graduate). In this study the factors of the study that the researcher took are: generalized stress, career and academic stress, stress prone tendencies, irritability, easy going personality, low level of stress management skills, negative mood state, meaningless thoughts, physical symptoms of stress and apprehensive behavior.

Objective of the study

To study the stress level of undergraduate and postgraduate students.

Hypothesis of the study

There is a difference between stress level of undergraduate and postgraduate students.

Literature review

Pariat, L., Rynjah, A and Joplin, Kharjana, H.G (2014) ^[2] worked on a study on stress level of college students. They worked on interrelationship between stressors and coping strategies. They took a sample of 537 college students. They studied the academic, social, emotional and financial stress level of students. They found that out of the positive coping strategies meditation and prayer. Listening to music, sleep, pursuing hobby, talking to parents and family members were also found effective. However, out of negative coping strategies smoking, drug, alcohol and networking sites were found effective.

Robotham, D. (2008) ^[3] worked on a study stress among

higher education students towards a research agenda. The aim of this article was to review previous research studies and to establish a strategy for further research. Sharmila, S. (2017) [5] worked on the impact of stress factors on college student’s academic performance. They found out the stress factors influence on academic performance. They took a sample of 250 undergraduate students from the five college in Chennai. They found that students is under large amount of stress and the study found certain stress factors like health issue, career and social activities affect students’ academic performance. Khan, M. J and Altaf, S & Kausar, H. (2013) [1] worked on the effect of perceived academic stress on students’ performance. They took a sample of 150 university students between the age group of 18-25 years. They found significant effect of academic stress on student’s performance. There was a non-significant difference between male and female university students on the perceived stress level. A significant difference between junior and senior students was found on the perceived

stress level. Academic stress was found to be higher in younger students than older students. There was a non-significant difference on perceived stress level among students when stress was measured at the beginning and at the end of the semester.

Results and analysis

Table 1: frequency distribution

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Undergraduate	92	59.0	59.0	59.0
Post Graduate	64	41.0	41.0	100.0
Total	156	100.0	100.0	

As the above table 1 shows that out of 156 girl students 92 were undergraduate and 64 were post graduate which constitutes 59% under graduate and 41% post graduate.

Table 2: Descriptive analysis

Stress factors	Education	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Career and Academic Stress	Undergraduate	92	2.7826	.74699	.07788
	Post graduate	64	2.8711	.66218	.08277
Irritability	Undergraduate	92	3.1685	.79930	.08333
	Post graduate	64	2.7500	.86373	.10797
Stress Prone Tendencies	Undergraduate	92	2.7690	.52836	.05509
	Post graduate	64	2.5312	.74868	.09358
Easy Going Personality	Undergraduate	92	3.1522	.72149	.07522
	Post graduate	64	3.2344	.68411	.08551
Low Level Stress Management Skills	Undergraduate	92	2.8560	.64539	.06729
	Post graduate	64	2.8555	.51717	.06465
Negative Mood State	Undergraduate	92	2.4891	.78439	.08178
	Post graduate	64	2.4531	.75445	.09431
Meaningless Thought	Undergraduate	92	2.6196	1.04663	.10912
	Post graduate	64	2.5938	1.07966	.13496
Physical Symptoms Stress	Undergraduate	92	2.9293	.78998	.08236
	Post graduate	64	2.8984	.90053	.11257
Apprehensive Behavior	Undergraduate	92	2.4946	.79661	.08305
	Post graduate	64	2.7422	.67255	.08407
Generalized Stress	Undergraduate	92	2.9122	.48605	.05067
	Post graduate	64	2.7981	.47369	.05921

The above table (2) shows the Descriptive analysis of the various stress levels used in this study.

Table 3: Independent Samples t-Test

Stress factors		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Career and Academic Stress	Equal variances assumed	.092	.762	-.76	154	.447	-.08849	.11614	-.317	.140
	Equal variances not assumed			-.77	145.159	.437	-.08849	.11365	-.313	.136
Irritability	Equal variances assumed	.661	.417	3.11	154	.002	.41848	.134	.152	.684
	Equal variances not assumed			3.06	128.781	.003	.41848	.13639	.148	.688
Stress Prone Tendencies	Equal variances assumed	21.114	.000	2.32	154	.021	.23777	.10221	.035	.439
	Equal variances			2.19	105.454	.031	.23777	.10859	.022	.453

	not assumed									
Easy Going Personality	Equal variances assumed	.194	.661	-.71	154	.476	-.08220	.11499	-.309	.144
	Equal variances not assumed			-.72	140.129	.472	-.08220	.11389	-.307	.142
Low Level Stress Management Skills	Equal variances assumed	3.112	.080	.005	154	.996	.00051	.09706	-.191	.19225
	Equal variances not assumed			.005	150.862	.996	.00051	.09331	-.183	.184
Negative Mood State	Equal variances assumed	.644	.424	.286	154	.775	.03601	.12571	-.212	.284
	Equal variances not assumed			.288	138.969	.773	.03601	.12483	-.210	.282
Meaningless Thought	Equal variances assumed	.342	.559	.150	154	.881	.02582	.17258	-.315	.366
	Equal variances not assumed			.149	132.957	.882	.02582	.17355	-.317	.369
Physical Symptoms Stress	Equal variances assumed	1.229	.269	.227	154	.821	.03091	.13624	-.238	.300
	Equal variances not assumed			.222	123.922	.825	.03091	.13948	-.245	.306
Apprehensive Behavior	Equal variances assumed	.524	.470	-2.0	154	.044	-.24762	.12181	-.488	-.006
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.0	148.232	.038	-.24762	.11817	-.481	-.014
Generalized Stress	Equal variances assumed	.268	.605	1.45	154	.147	.11413	.07830	-.040	.268
	Equal variances not assumed			1.46	137.876	.145	.11413	.07793	-.039	.268

P <.05 and p <.01

Researchers in this study used independent sample t-test to examine the difference between the stress level of undergraduate and post graduate girl students. As shown in table 3 Levene's test for equality of variances tests the hypothesis that the two population variances are equal. In this study, the Levene statistics is $F = .092, 661, 21.114, .194, .080, .424, .559, .269, .470, .605$ for career and academic stress, irritability, stress prone tendencies, easy going personality, low level of stress management stress, negative mood state, meaningless thought, physical symptoms of stress, apprehensive behavior and generalized stress, hence the corresponding level of significance is large (i.e., $p > .05$). Thus, the assumption of homogeneity of variance has not been violated, and the equal variances assumed t-test statistics can be used for evaluating the null hypothesis of equality of means.

The results from the analysis indicates that there is a significant difference between the undergraduate and post graduate students in the career and academic stress, easy going personality and apprehensive behavior. Moreover irritability, stress prone tendencies, low level of stress management skills, negative mood state, meaningless thought, physical symptoms of stress and generalized stress have no significant difference between undergraduate and post graduate students.

Discussion

The present study was done by the researchers on the stress level of undergraduate and post graduate girl students. Stress arises when the internal and external pressure exceed the person's resources to cope with their situation. As college life

is one of the most stressing and memorable life in students life. College students are exposed to recognizable amount of stress which constantly changes coping methods of an individual. In this study researchers considered the factors of stress namely: generalized stress, career and academic stress, stress prone tendencies, irritability, easy going personality, low level of stress management skills, negative mood state, meaningless thoughts, physical symptoms of stress and apprehensive behavior. The results from the analysis indicates that there is a significant difference between the undergraduate and post graduate students in the career and academic stress, easy going personality and apprehensive behavior.

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