

Stress and Academic Stress: A Global Pandemic

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Abstract

Along with the improvements during the scientific era and the rapid development of information, competitiveness among people has 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 behavioral models, as well. However overstress causes problems and discomfort, and can have serious effects on people. If you were to ask a dozen people to define stress, or explain what causes stress for them or how stress affects them, you would likely get 12 different answers to each of these requests. The reason for this is that there is no fix definition of stress that everyone agrees on, what is stressful for one person may be pleasurable or have little effect on others and we all react to stress differently. The present paper is an attempt to see the various factors affecting academic stress and how we manage these to live a life without stress.

Meaning of stress

The word stress is derived from the latin word “String” which means, “to be drawn tight”. Stress can be defined as follows-

1. In medical terms stress is described as “a physical or psychological stimulus that can produce mental tension or physiological reactions that may lead to illness. “When you are under stress your ordinal gland releases corticosteroids, which are converted to cortical in the blood stream cortical home an immune suppressive effect in your body.”
2. According to Rechard S Lazarus, stress is a feeling experienced when a person thinks that “the demands exceed the personal and social resources the individual is able to mobilize.”

Stress is not always necessarily harmful. Hans Salye said in 1956, “stress is not necessarily something bad, it all depends on how you take it. The stress is exhilarating creative successful work is beneficial, while that of failure, humiliation or infection is

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detrimental.” Stress can be therefore negative, positive or neutral. Passing in an examination can be just stressful as failing.

Types of stress

1. **Acute stress:-** it is usually for short time and may be due to work pressure, meeting deadlines pressure or minor accident, over exertion, increased physical activity etc.
2. **Overwork stress:-** it is common in people who take too many responsibilities and are overloaded overworked disorganized, always in a hurry and never in time. These people are generally in positions of importance at their workplace and stressful lifestyle is inherent in them which results into headaches, hypertension, migraines, chest pain and heart diseases.
3. **Chronic stress:-** it is the most serious which occurs for a prolonged stress that exists for weeks, months or even years. This is due to poverty, broken or stressed families and marriages.
4. **Social stress:-** it usually involve leaving one's entire support structure behind, creating a new social network, dealing with being away from home for the first time and finding less parental support.
5. **Academic stress:-** this is the stress which is very dangerous for our young generation. It is very common and a very hot topic of today's research. The academic stress is related with the students and their academic problems, frustrations or problems faced in schools, students' might suffer from an inability to adjust, leading to unhappy or problematic phenomenon occurring to the body and mind.

Academic stress involves multiple stressors particular to students such as academic, financial, time, health related and self-imposed types of stressors. Stressors affecting students that are categorized as academic, financial, time or health related and self-imposed (Goodman, 1993).

It is associated with negative health outcomes of depression and physical illness(Mac George, Santer, Gillihan, 2005)

A study was done on students by undergraduate research journal for the Human

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Sciences found that academic workload were ranked by the most students as being somewhat marked academic stress as being one of the most stressful factors.

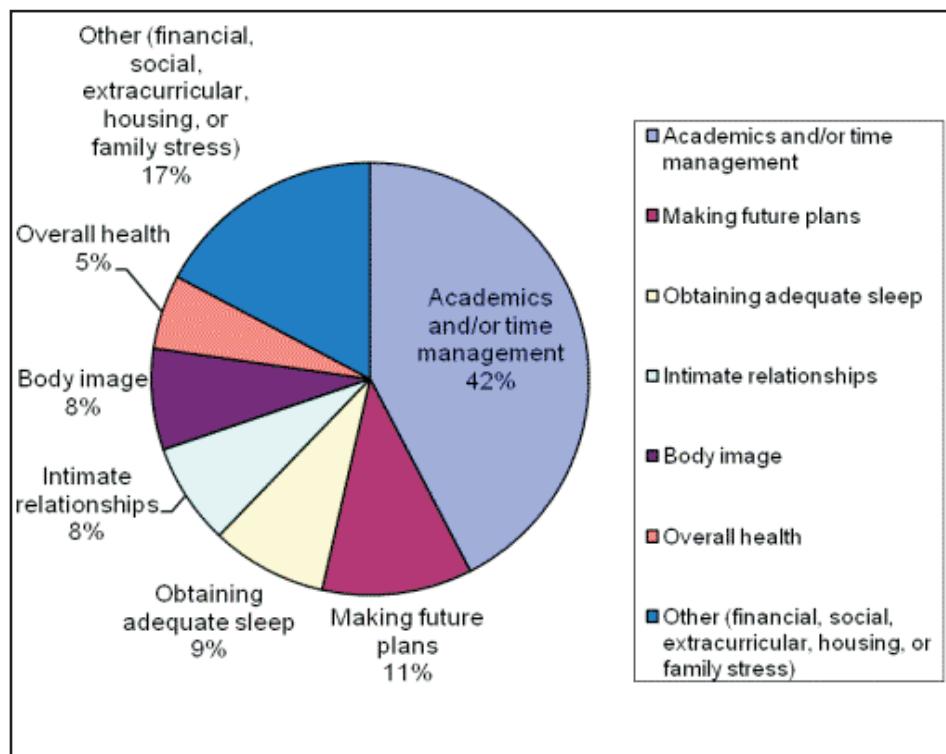


Fig.1 Factors/Causes of Stress in students

Causes of academic stress

In the increasingly competitive environment an increasing amount of academic stress and the associated health problems have also been reported. Academic stress as well as work load are said to be silent killers manifesting diseases deadly and massively enough to be classified as a global pandemic.

The possible causes of academic stress have been divided into four groups:-

- Stress from test scores: it includes tests, results and parent's expectations.
- Stress from teachers: it includes courses, materials, teaching methods and homework problems, learning style mismatch.

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- Stress from myself: it include one's own expectations, choice of subjects, future plans and time management.
- Stress from peers: it includes group reports, academic competition and disturbances from classmates.

These all are the some common causes of academic stress which a student face during his/her life in college, school or university.

Table 1 also gives a belief outlook on causes of academic stress.

CAUSES OF STRESS IN COLLEGE STUDENTS	
Not enough money	Academic Achievement (tests, grades, deadlines, etc.)
Unrealistic expectations	Time urgency - too much work/pressures
Social pressures	Change in eating and sleeping habits
Extra-curricular activities	Stress prone diet i.e. coffee, tea, cola, chocolate, not enough vitamin C & B complex
Dissatisfaction	A break-up with a boy or girlfriend, changing to a new environment/ changes in responsibilities
A part-time or full-time job	A bad Roommate or not enough privacy
Parental Expectations -pressure of "Being Mature"	
Too much studying and not enough physical activity	Loneliness

Table 1: Causes of Stress in students

Tension headache	Excess weight or decreased weight
Muscle pain, spasms	Excessive nervous energy
Acne, eczema	Chronic diarrhea or constipation
Constant fatigue	Stomach or intestinal ulcers
Allergies	Increased cholesterol levels
Increased blood pressure	Tendency toward fainting or nausea
Migraine headaches	Increased susceptibility to infection
Frigidity/impotence	Increased possibility of heart disease
Frequent heartburn	Cardiovascular disorders
Shortness of breath	Inability to laugh easily or openly
Feeling of Hopelessness in coping with life	Sudden outbursts of tears or an inability to cry
Depressive Disorders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of interest or pressure • Sleep disorder • Difficulty in thinking, concentrating or making decisions • Thoughts about death and suicide.
Panic Disorders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accelerated Heart Rate • Sweating • Chest Pain • Fear of dying • Numbness or tingling sensations
Anxiety Disorders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fatigue • Difficulty in concentration/memory • Muscle cramps • Sleep Disorders

Table 2: Consequences or effects of Academic Stress

Academic Stress Management Tips

“It’s not what happens to you that matters, but how you take it”.

- Hans Selye

1. Organize/Manage your time: One of the main causes of academic stress is poor

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time management. If you are organized, you can manage things in proper ways without putting pressure on you. Plan ahead. Make a schedule for the day, week and month. Include time for stress reduction as a part of your schedule.

2. **Know your stressors:** Determine what events distress you. Try to avoid, eliminate or reduce these stressors. Plan your strategies to overcome these stressors.
3. **Talk to others:** Talk to your friends, family members teachers and with your parents about your problems and seek their help to solve that problems.
4. **Be physically active:** It definitely works to reduce stress. When you feel nervous or overburdened, take a walk or do any activity that you like most.
5. **Eat Healthy Food:** For good academic performance healthy food is equally important. Don't skip meals. Avoid smoking, drinking or other stimulants they will reduce the memory/concentration power.
6. **Take deep breath for instant stress relief:** Breathe deeply slowly and exhale out slowly. Deep breath helps you get plenty of oxygen and may give you instant stress relief.
7. **Maintain healthy habits:** Eating well and getting enough rest is crucial for staying healthy and calm. Make sure you account for working balanced meals at getting 6-8 hours of rest most nights in your scheduling. Getting regular exercises.
8. **Set Realistic Goals:** Many students generate extra stress for themselves by taking on too many burden or simply having unrealistic expectations for themselves. Set realistic, achievable goals and don't be too hard on yourself if you fail once in a while.
9. **Cooperation of parents:** Don't put burden of your expectations or dreams on the mind of your child. Don't compare your child with others. Allow his/her to work freely.
10. **Seek help of Counselors:** Most colleges and universities offer free counseling services regarding your career and future plans. Consult help from them to deal with your Academic stress.

Quick ways to handle your Academic Stress

- Find a physical activity that you enjoy and make time for it.
- Prioritize your time on paper and set reasonable goals that can be accomplished.

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- Don't make unnecessary appointments or unachievable deadlines. Learn to say "No".
- Create opportunities when you can relax your entire mind and body.
- Avoid a stress prone diet.
- Use family or friends as a support group.
- Recognize your own body's physical and mental signs of stress and develop your positive strategies of coping.
- Learn to develop a sense of humor about yourself and your problems.
- Laughter Therapy helps to relieve stress.
- Hugging is also good – "Jadu ki jhappi" helps to melt away your stress.

Conclusion

So in this competitive environment in the field of academics demands a "strategic learning revolution" and "work smart" method to meet the increasing learning demands with the lesser use of time and effort.

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