Factors of Stress Amongst Students of Professional Institutes

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Abstract

The study was conducted to identify factors of stress amongst (*n* = 428) students of the age group of 18 years - 23 years studying in various professional institutes in the state of Punjab. There were 243 (56.77 %) boys, while 185 (43.22%) were girls. Data were collected by using a self administered questionnaire through convenience sampling method from Gurdaspur, Amritsar, Jalandhar, Ludhiana, and Chandigarh ; 58% of the students (248) belonged to the graduate courses such as B.com, B. Tech, BBA, BCA, LLB and 42% (180) of the students belonged to the post graduate courses such as MBA, M. Tech, MCA, and M.Com. The time period of the study was January - May 2018. Eight factors were extracted through factor analysis. The total variance explained was 68.13%. The first factor extracted was Daily Grind (13.308%) followed by Academic Pressure (11.653%), Peer Pressure (11.269 %), Family Pressure (7.746%), Personal Complexes (6.971%), and Financial Pressure (4.747%). There were three factors which seemed different relatively in terms of previous literature such as Daily Grind (13.308%), Procrastination (6.666%), and Materialism (5.780%). This indicated that the daily activities and chores amongst students were also a cause for huge stress due to time constraints. Further, the students who kept on delaying or postponing things for later got stressed out when work piled up. It was also observed that the increasing association of good living with materialistic things or money also gave rise to stress and depression amongst students.

Keywords : **stress, students, materialism, academic pressure, family pressure, procrastination**

JEL Classification : I3, I30, I31

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Stress is considered as a multidimensional concept and has taken the form of an epidemic. Menon and Raithatha (2012) stated that stress at work is a relatively new phenomenon of modern lifestyles. A growing problem not only in India but all over the world is that students are more stressed than ever. Every individual carries various proportions of sensitivity, intellectuality, and spirituality, and occupational, social, as well as physical well-being affect a person's health (Nelson & Simmons, 2003) and her/his stress levels. Pargman (2006) stated that stress is an uncertain reaction to external and internal factors that reflects a negative or positive reaction to environmental stimuli. The most dominant stressors amongst students reflected by various researchers are academics and examinations (Babar, Kahloon, Kazmi, Khalid, Nawaz, Khan, & Khan, 2004). It is a common preview amongst students that they experience greater pressure during their examination period and as well as due

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to tough assignments, lengthy syllabi, and arduous presentations. This kind of pressure, if it is perceived negatively, impacts physical health in general and mental health, in particular, of a person. This pressure, if targeted positively, may even motivate a person to put in extra effort and achieve more than the potential. Kala, Jan, Subramani, and Banureka (2017) examined the impact of occupational stress on the work-life balance of employees. Kumari, Verma, and Verma (2012) revealed that the respondents from the lowest age group and lowest level of education were found to be highly stressed.

Review of Literature

Shah, Hasan, Malik, and Sreeramareddy (2010) conducted a study amongst undergraduate medical students of CMH Medical College, Lahore in Pakistan. The effective sample turned out to be 160 out of 200 respondents. The findings revealed highest level of perceived stress amongst female students than male students. It was found that factors such as 'high parental expectations', 'frequency of examinations,' 'vastness of academic curriculum,' 'sleeping difficulties,' 'worrying about the future,' 'loneliness,' 'becoming a doctor,' 'performance in periodic examinations' were the most frequently and severely occurring sources of stress. The results also indicated that perceived stress lowered down the academic performance of these students.

Waghachavare, Dhumale, Kadam, and Gore (2013) conducted a study on professional college students of medical and dental courses. They analyzed stress among these students and its association with various academic, social, and health-related factors. The findings revealed that a majority of students experienced stress. Female students were found to be more stressed out than male students. The academic factor was found to be one of the important stressors amongst them. The study also revealed that excessive stress led to psychological problems such as depression and anxiety.

Pariat, Rynjah, Joplin, and Kharjana (2014) conducted a study on 537 college students of five reputed colleges of Shillong. The students of different streams such as arts, commerce, and science were the sample of the study. A structured questionnaire was used for data collection, which covered the four aspects of stress such as academic stress, social stress, emotional stress, and financial stress. The various positive and negative coping strategies were revealed in their study. The findings revealed that positive coping strategies such as meditation, prayer, sleep, pursuing hobbies, and following one's interest were very helpful to combat academic stress ; whereas, a negative correlation was found between academic stress with coping strategies such as use of intoxicants and drugs. Overall, these students experienced low stress amongst themselves.

Alleyne, Alleyne, and Greenidge (2014) conducted a study on life satisfaction and perceived stress amongst the undergraduate university students of Barbados, the Caribbean region of North America. The sample size comprised of a total of 172 students. The findings revealed that students showed more satisfaction with relationships, self - image, and physical appearance ; whereas, dissatisfaction was found amongst them with regards to campus facilities, quality of teaching, financial security, and job situation. Hence, the sources of stress were related to university facilities than their personal reasons. It was found that higher levels of perceived stress were associated with lower levels of satisfaction with life.

Saeed, Bahnassy, Al-Hamdan, Almudhaibery, and Alyahya (2016) determined the factors associated with perceived stress amongst medical students in the College of Medicine, King Saud Bin Abdulaziz University for Health Sciences and King Fahad Medical City, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The findings revealed that severe stress was associated with female students in comparison to male students. The most important factors affecting students' stress was found due to nervousness, feeling hopeless, feeling restless, and depression.

Madebo, Yosef, and Tesfaye (2016) assessed the perceived stress level and associated factors among health Science students studying at Debre Birehane University, Ethiopia. The sample size comprised of 279 students. The findings revealed that higher level of stress was found amongst the female students and the odds of perceived

stress level was noticed higher amongst the first year students as compared to the senior or fourth year students. The study indicated that gender, pocket money, social support, relationship with class mates and dorm mates, and physical problems were the significant factors that contributed to the perceived stress level amongst these students.

Need of the Study

Students often face anxiety and depression due to various pressures like academic, parental, and societal. Literature reveals that in India, the antecedents of emotional stress and inner health issues are at a prominent level due to academic and social stress amongst students (Krishnakumar, Geeta, & Gopalan, 2005 ; Lai & Wong, 1992 ; Verma, Sharma, & Larson, 2002). Some of the researchers also stated that students' stress levels arise due to family problems. Family problems decrease the learning capacity and academic accomplishments of the students (Chew - Graham, Rogers, & Yassin, 2003 ; Fish & Nies, 1996). Phinney and Haas (2003) stated that amongst students, stressful situations occurred due to difficult financial challenges, domestic responsibilities, and a heavy academic load. Kumar (2018) and Iyer (2018) stated that student suicides have assumed epidemic proportions, with one student committing suicide every hour in India. Thus, an effort has been made to identify the factors of stress amongst the students of professional institutes in the state of Punjab.

Objective of the Study

- To identify factors of stress amongst students studying in professional institutes in Punjab.

Research Methodology

The sample size comprised of 428 students of various professional institutes in Punjab. There were 243 (56.77 %) boys while the remaining 185 (43.22%) were girls. The students of the age group from 18 years to 23 years acted as the respondents for the study. Data were collected by using a self administered questionnaire through convenience sampling method from the students of different professional courses such as B.com, B. Tech, BBA, BCA, LLB, MBA, M.Tech, MCA, and M.Com ; 58% of the students (248) belonged to graduate courses and 42% (180) of the students belonged to post graduate courses. To develop a list of information items that was sought from respondents, self made statements based on intuition, discussion with experts, and those which were found suitable to analyze stress as per current scenario of students as well as previous related literature on stress were reviewed (Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983 ; Essel & Owusu, 2017). Factor analysis approach was employed to identify factors that are responsible to cause stress amongst these students. Responses were measured on a 5 - point scale, where 5 indicated *"strongly agree"* and 1 indicated *"strongly disagree"*. The time period of the study was from January - May 2018.

Analysis and Results

The factor analysis was employed and suitability of data was checked by computing the correlation matrix which came out to be considerably significant. The overall sample was found to be adequate as KMO (0.784) came sufficiently high. Also, the Bartlett's sphericity test came to be statistically significant (p = .000). Also, data were found to be reliable, as the Cronbach's alpha is sufficient (.748).

The principal component analysis with varimax rotation method extracted a total of eight factors. The Table 1 indicates that the factor loadings greater than 0.45 were taken. Eigen values for factors 1 to 8 are 15.852, 13.968,

Table 1. Factors, Communality Values, Eigen Values, and Percent of Variance

Statement (Labels)	Factors								Communality
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
DG6	.964								.941
DG3	.943								.901
DG5	.914								.865
DG1	.883								.797
DG4	.862								.754
DG2	.814								.738
AP26		.836							.780
AP25		.827							.735
AP24		.817							.745
AP22		.810							.680
AP23		.809							.671
AP27		.798							.762
PP30			.896						.828
PP29			.890						.822
PP32			.878						.816
PP28			.850						.762
Pp31			.847						.757
FP8				.858					.767
FP7				.825					.697
FP10				.815					.707
FP9				.789					.663
PC33					.779				.632
PC37					.718				.538
PC34					.695				.506
PC36					.663				.505
PC35					.662				.500
P20						.779			.704
P18						.761			.612
P19						.744			.591
P21						.678			.503
M11							.833		.718
M12							.777		.649
M13							.751		.502
FNP15								.674	.526
FNP 16								.647	.507
FNP 14								.605	.526
FNP 17								.592	.510
Eigen value	**15.852**	**13.968**	**8.789**	**7.454**	**7.083**	**6.508**	**4.588**	**3.898**	
% of Variance	**13.308**	**11.653**	**11.267**	**7.746**	**6.971**	**6.666**	**5.780**	**4.747**	**Total**
									68.139%

Note. KMO MSA = 0.787 ; Bartle` = 4908.610

8.789, 7.454, 7.083, 6.508, 4.588, and 3.898, respectively. A total of 68.139% of the variance is explained by the extracted factors. These eight factors explain variance of the order of 13.308%, 11.653%, 11.267%, 7.746%, 6.971%, 6.666%, 5.780%, and 4.747%, respectively. The communalities magnitude from 0.941 (DG6) to 0.500 (PC35) shows the amount of variance in a variable that was accounted for by the factor solution. Those statements were retained for analysis whose communality and factor loadings were found to be greater than 0.5. There are three statements which were discarded from the analysis to improve the Cronbach's alpha due to communality less than 0.5 and factor loading less than 0.4. The statements are : 'I feel I eat lot of junk food,' 'I feel I can be fitter/healthier than what I currently am,' and 'I am habitual of eating dinner late' (refer to Table 1).

The Table 2 includes the names of factors depending upon the nature of statements included in the factor.

Table 2. Naming of Factors

Factors	Name of Factors (% of Variance)	Label	Statement with Factor Loadings
Factor 1	**Daily Grind (13.308%)**	DG6	6. I use my mobile phone for long hours.
		DG3	3. I don't get enough sleep.
		DG5	5. I generally sleep late night.
		DG1	1. I don't get me` to pursue my hobbies.
		DG4	4. I don't get enough spare time.
		DG2	2. I get burdened by the assignments regarding studies.
Factor 2	**Academic Pressure (11.653%)**	AP26	26. I feel many of the teachers need improvement in teaching methods.
		AP25	25. I feel my teachers are not very helpful.
		AP24	25. I feel my classmates grasp the concepts be. er than me.
		AP22	22. When I get bad grades, I feel low.
		AP23	23. I feel exhausted by too many class assignments.
		AP27	27. Teachers only like students who score more marks.
Factor 3	**Peer Pressure (11.267%)**	PP30	30. Most of my peers/friends have be er mobiles than what I carry.
		PP29	29. My clothes are not as good as those of my peers.
		PP32	32. My parents do not allow me to go on trips/ oungs with my friends.
		PP28	28. My thinking is different from most of my friends.
		PP31	31. Most of my peers/ friends come on be er conveyances than I do.
Factor 4	**Family Pressure (7.746%)**	FP8	8. My parents have big hopes from me.
		FP7	7. My family has strict rules and regulaons.
		FP10	10. My family undergoes lots of tensions.
		FP9	9. I have many responsibilies at my home.
Factor 5	**Personal Complexes (6.971%)**	PC33	33. I think I am overweight/under weight.
		PC37	37. I feel many mes, English becomes a language barrier.
		PC34	34. My skin texture/complexion is not good enough.
		PC36	36. I lack good communicaon skills.
		PC35	35. I many mes have a complex regarding the way I look.
Factor 6	**Procrasnaàon` (6.666%)**	P20	20. I keep procrasna ng my tasks.
		P18	18. I feel I lack focus on targets.

		P19	19. I always delay in taking decisions.
		P21	21. I need to take be er care of my health.
Factor 7	**Materialism (5.780%)**	M11	11. Money brings social status.
		M12	12. My family's life could have been more be er if we had more money.
		M13	13. I have to make my life be er than my elders.
Factor 8	**Financial Pressure (4.747%)**	FNP15	15. I feel my family income is not enough.
		FNP16	16. I feel difficulty in arranging money for the sake of enjoyment.
		FNP14	14. I can't spend money on buying things like others.
		FNP17	17. Most of my peers are spending more than I do.

↳ **Factor 1 - Daily Grind :** The first factor explains 13.308% of the total variance carrying six statements that indicate the statements which show the increase of stress due to daily activities undertaken by students. The highest factor loading is 0.964 in case of the statement "I use cell phones for long hours" followed by "I don't get enough sleep" (0.943) and "I generally sleep late night". The other statements are about not getting enough spare time for themselves in terms of hobbies and studies.

↳ **Factor 2 - Academic Pressure :** The second factor highlights the stress due to academic pressure on students. It explains 11.653% of the variance with six statements. The statement "I feel many of the teachers need improvement in teaching methods" scores the highest loading of 0.836 followed by "I feel my teachers are not very helpful" (0.827), "I feel my classmates get the concepts better than me" (0.817), "When I get bad grades, I feel low" (0.810), "I feel exhausted by too many class assignments" (0.809), and "Teachers only like students who score more marks" (0.798).

↳ **Factor 3 - Peer Pressure :** This factor broadly conveys that the students get pressure due to the attitude or living standards of their peers/friends. The third factor explains 11.267% of the variance with five statements. The highest loading of 0.896 is secured by the statement "Most of my peers/friends have better mobiles than what I carry" followed by "My clothes are not as good as those of my peers" (0.890) and "My parents do not allow me to go on trips/ outings with my friends" (0.878). The remaining statements are "My thinking is different from most of my friends" and "Most of my peers/ friends come on better conveyances than I do".

↳ **Factor 4 - Family Pressure :** This factor denotes the cause of stress amongst the students due to family issues. The fourth factor explains 7.746% of the variance with four statements. The highest magnitude of loading is 0.858 for the statement "My parents have big hopes from me" followed by "My family has strict rules and regulations" (0.825), "My family undergoes lots of tensions" (0.815), and "I have many responsibilities at my home" (0.789). These statements indicate that students get stressed out and worried in terms of their responsibilities towards their family.

↳ **Factor 5 - Personal Complexes :** The fifth factor indicates the personal complexes of students in relation to their counterparts. This factor explains 6.971% of the variance with five statements. The highest loading is 0.779 in case of "I think I am over weight/underweight" followed by "I feel many times English becomes a language barrier" (0.718), "My skin texture/complexion is not good enough" (0.695), "I lack good communication skills" (0.663), and "I many times have a complex regarding the way I look" (0.662).

↳ **Factor 6 - Procrastination :** The sixth factor highlights habits of keeping the things delayed on a daily basis. It explains 6.666% of the variance with four statements. The statement "I keep postponing my tasks" scores the highest loading of 0.779 followed by " I feel I lack focus on targets" (0.761), "I always delay in taking decisions" (0.744), and "I need to take better care of my health" (0.678).

↳ **Factor 7 - Materialism :** The seventh factor explains 5.780% of the total variance carrying three statements indicating the thinking which states that more materialistic things can improve the status of one's life. The highest factor loading is 0.833 in case of the statement "Money brings social status" followed by "My family's life could have been better if we had more money" (0.777) and "I have to make my life better than my elders" (0.751).

↳ **Factor 8 - Financial Pressure (4.747%) :** The last factor includes the statements related to stress or pressure in terms of money. It consists of four statements explaining 4.747 % of the variance. The highest loading of 0.674 is secured by the statement "I feel my family income is not enough and followed by "I feel difficulty in arranging money for the sake of enjoyment" (0.647). The remaining two statements indicate that students get stressed out when they feel others spend more money as compared to them.

Suggestions and Managerial Implications

Although the sequence of extracted factors (such as Daily Grind (13.308%) followed by Academic Pressure (11.653%), Peer Pressure (11.267%), Family Pressure (7.746%), Personal Complexes (6.971%), Procrastination (6.666%), Materialism (5.780%), and Financial Pressure (4.747%)) may be different, but the present study can be linked to the study of Phinney and Haas (2003), which stated that the stressful situations amongst students occur due to 'Financial Challenges,' 'Domestic Responsibilities,' and 'Heavy Academic Load'. The findings of Shah et al. (2010) also revealed that 'Frequency of Examinations' and 'Vastness of Academic Curriculum' were the most important factors causing stress amongst the undergraduate medical students. In the present study, there are three factors which seem to be different in terms of previous literature such as Daily Grind (13.308%), Procrastination (6.666%), and Materialism (5.780%). This indicates that the students get overburdened by the pressures of daily activities. Further, the students who keep on postponing things for later on also get stressed out when work piles up as a burden. This can be linked to the hectic lifestyle of today's generation. The number of activities that they have to cover and the targets they have to achieve are far more than the time and resources at their disposal and such situations may lead to unavoidable procrastination and stress. The thought of association of a happy life with materialistic things or money also gives rise to stress and depression among students. Pariat et al. (2014) recommended that academic stress can be controlled by meditating, taking good sleep, pursuing hobbies, and following one's interests. Therefore, students should adopt measures to avoid the burden that they always carry on their minds. This will undoubtedly keep the students calm in difficult situations. Also, unnecessary procrastination should be strictly avoided by sticking to a proper schedule. Rai and Tripathi (2017) revealed that scope of occupational stress, that is, role uncertainty/ambiguity, role boundary, role responsibility, and the physical environment had a substantial significant impact on turnover intentions. Further, Indian traditions have always emphasized on simple living and high thinking and have negated materialism to the core. The youth today should learn from their deep-rooted culture that money is not a key to happiness.

Parents should be supportive of their children and should believe that academic success is not everything. They should believe in their children, which would make their wards happy and confident individuals. The myopic vision of parents and society, where academic success is regarded as the barometer of life's success should not be adopted to judge the youth and their capabilities.

Limitations of the Study and Scope for Further Research

The study is confined to the state of Punjab. Therefore, the results may not be representative for the country as a whole. Although there is a possibility of applicability of the conclusions about students to other parts of the country, no such general applicability beyond the respondents of Punjab is claimed. An inter-state study can provide a better glimpse of the Indian perspective.

Amongst the higher - education sector, only the students of professional institutes were selected as the universe of the study. The college and university students were not included as their responses would have been different from students pursuing professional courses. Therefore, the viewpoint of college and university students was not included, which could be studied in future studies.

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