Study and Analysis of Academic Stress of B.Ed. Students

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In India, at a given point of time, nearly 15 million people suffer from serious psychiatric illness, and another 30 million from mild/moderate psychiatric problems. The disability associated with mental or brain disorders stops people from working and engaging in other creative activities.

Getting a good night sleep under worrisome circumstances is often a problem for college students. The college campus is a seemingly stressful environment. In fact, we commonly hear individuals complain that they were up all night cramming for an examination, or worrying about various issues. Academic concerns pervade the lives of students, interrupting aspects of their daily routine. College life, characterized by the pressure to seek an appropriate identity, certainly presents an array of stressors (Stark and Traxler 1974; Whitbourne and Tesch 1985). Students are pressured to perform, pressured to fit in, pressured to commit, and pressured to live up to the expectations of others. They even set goals for themselves that are sometimes impossible to achieve. Forming an identity in a college environment is indeed difficult, as common worries can have significant behavioral consequences, particularly on sleep patterns. Psychologists, though, have devoted little attention to investigating the ramifications that academic worries have on sleep behaviors. In this study, the relevance of worry will be examined in relation to quality of sleep in undergraduate college students. emotional or physical threats, whether actual or imagined.

Present age is the age of competition. Scientific and Technological advancement all over the globe has made man very conscious and sensitive about his studies, vocation, lifestyle, relations etc. This immense progress has given rise to certain problems. One of the major problems of today's world is "stress". Every person has a unique nature as regard to capabilities, attitudes, personality characteristics and interest. The students have a major impact of stress due to bloodshed competition in every field. The parents and teachers are eager to know the various factors, which enhance the stress among students.Dr. Ranjita Misra has also written in her paper about Academic stress & views are:-

This paper investigated the interrelationship among academic stress, anxiety, time management, and leisure satisfaction among 249 university undergraduates by age

and gender. Time management behaviors had a greater buffering effect on academic stress than leisure satisfaction activities. Significant gender differences existed among all the measures. Females had more effective time management behaviors than males, but also experienced higher academic stress and anxiety. Males benefited more than females from leisure activities. Freshmen and sophomore students had higher reactions to stress than juniors and seniors. Anxiety, time management, and leisure satisfaction were all predictors of academic stress in the multivariate analysis. Anxiety reduction and time management in conjunction with leisure activities may be an effective strategy for reducing academic stress in college students.

Stress

Stress is a term in <u>psychology</u> and <u>biology</u>, first coined in the biological context in the 1930s, which has in more recent decades become commonly used in <u>popular parlance</u>. It refers to the consequence of the failure of an <u>organism</u> – <u>human</u> or <u>animal</u> – to respond appropriately to <u>emotional</u> or <u>physical</u> threats, whether actual or imagined

Stress <u>symptoms</u> commonly include a state of <u>alarm</u> and <u>adrenaline</u> production, short-term resistance as a coping mechanism, and <u>exhaustion</u>, as well as <u>irritability</u>, muscular tension, inability to <u>concentrate</u> and a variety of <u>physiological</u> reactions such as <u>headache</u> and elevated heart rate.

Stress is a feeling that's created when we react to particular events. It's the body's way of rising to a challenge and preparing to meet a tough situation with focus, strength, stamina, and heightened alertness.

Academic Stress

Stress occurs when there is substantive imbalance between environment and demand and response capability of organism. The term "stress" in physical science means, " A force/ pressure exerted upon a person who resists the force/ pressure in his effort to maintain his original state and in the process suffers from some degree of discomfort".

The term stress has come into wide use in behaviour study only within the past two decades. But in this relatively short time it has all but preempted a field previously shared by a number of other concepts like anxiety, frustration, conflicts etc.

As people from all walks of life cope with the hustle and bustle of life in Singapore, school children are not spared with the academic stress either. This passage therefore serves to highlight some of the things students can do to cope with their stresses in school.

The most important element of doing well in school is to be consistent with the school work. Students who do last minute school work or prepare for their exams at the very last minute are the ones who will most likely suffer from academic stress. Therefore, one should always revise consistently, finish all assignments on time, ask and clear all questions when in doubt. In this way, by keeping up with the school work, students will less likely suffer from stress during the examinations.

As the saying goes, all work and no play makes jack a dull boy. The purpose of

Co-Curricular Activities (CCAs) therefore serves to ensure a balance between academic studies as well as play. One should never undermine the importance of CCAs. CCAs create an avenue for students to learn new things of their personal interest aside from academic studies. This in the process can allow students to distress and not think of their school work. In addition, CCA can help to build one's leadership qualities, which can be very useful in life later. All outstanding students too excel in their CCAs. All students should therefore study hard as well as participate actively in a CCA.

One of the ways students can cope with academic stress is to study in group. Studying in groups allow students to clear their doubts with their peers quickly. In addition, the presence of their friends helps to give students a psychological boost in times of stress.

However, the most important way to cope with academic stress is not to study hard but to study smart. Students who memorize diligently without understanding will find it very stressful to digest such a huge amount of information. Drawing mind maps can be a very effective way to help students see the big picture in a particular chapter, and in the process help them to grasp fundamental concepts easily. Students who have difficulty understanding certain topics should try to employ the use of mind maps to help them get a clearer picture.

As we can see, there are numerous ways to alleviate academic stresses. Students who feel stressed up with their studies can employ one of the above methods. Last but not least, if academic stress becomes too overwhelming, one must seek professional help immediately to contain the situation.

Picture a typical, hard-working student. Each day she receives multiple assignments to complete for homework. She is involved in several extracurricular activities so she doesn't have much extra time. After sports practice, she struggles home, ladden with books, to begin studying. On a typical evening she has to work diligently for a couple of hours to complete her homework for school the next day. She has a rigorous schedule that includes honors and advanced placement classes so some nights she is forced to stay up very late to keep up with her classes. Other nights she has an extra packet of work to complete for her SAT Prep course. All this work puts a lot of pressure on her. This may not seem like anything out of the ordinary and for many students it's not. The push to be overachievers and get into the top colleges has caused many high school students to take on heavier workloads and more challenging classes. This push to achieve, however, doesn't end once students reach college. In fact, once they reach the top schools they worked so hard to get into, many students are forced to work even harder than they did in high school and instead of the push to get into the top college, it becomes the push to get into the top graduate school. Graduate students at the country's top schools, in turn, find that they must continue to overextend themselves in order to secure the top jobs in their particular field. As you can see, there is something wrong. America's educational system is seriously flawed because it puts too much emphasis on measuring achievement and not enough on true learning. The problem starts as early as middle school and perhaps even before. Students are weighed down with lengthy homework assignments, which may involve hours of their time each night. In fact, U.S. students now have more

homework than ever before and it starts at an earlier age. Specialists, teachers, and parents alike tend to agree that homework is a very important tool. They say that the amount of homework students do as middle and high scholars leads directly to their success rate in the future. Many studies have been done to prove the positive effects of homework. Some show that students who do more work score better on standardized tests. Homework these days has come to be a measurement, a way in which parents and teachers can judge how good an education their students are getting. The standard rule is the more homework the better the value of education. After all, parents and teachers alike want to see their students do well and that means scoring highly on standardized tests and getting into the best colleges. This is the way our society measures the success of its students and everyone wants to be successful so the push lately has been to encourage students to take on more challenging classes and this provides them with more homework. In a recent TIME magazine article, During the past four decades, the suicide rate for teenagers and young adults has more than tripled. Suicide has become the second leading cause of death among college students. It is hard to investigate the actual causes of college suicides because while the statistics are rising and a few shocking stories have caught our attention, the number of deaths at any given school is very small and thus in-depth inquiries are very seldom done, but there are several factors which can increase the risk of suicide substantially. Foreign students are more prone to suicide than natives because many they become isolated. They often can't find any familiar cultural or family ties in their new environment and thus concentrate solely on their work. Those with suicidal tendencies may be more difficult to recognize in a college setting because instead of being impulsive and out of control, college students who are suicidal tend to be withdrawn, quiet, and to draw little attention to themselves. Those students who move beyond depression to suicide, may fantasize of a better world waiting for them. They are often very resistant to seeking help because they see it as a weakness (Lipschitz). The academic stress faced by college students these days is perhaps higher than ever before. They are faced with a new situation when they reach college and must then struggle to keep up with their new environment. Many college students begin to feel worthless. They measure themselves only by academic or athletic success. This can distort their perception of reality and cause them to blow things out of proportion. The change in attitude may not even be noticeable to close friends because students who begin to feel overwhelmed and hopeless tend to hide their feelings by immersing themselves in work. As stated early they will usually not seek the help of for example, a guidance counselor, because they do not want to seem weak. This feeling of hopelessness can become a big problem in situations where students are expected to perform at a very high calibar for a long period of time. Jason Altom, considered an extremely gifted graduate student at Harvard University, killed himself last August. He drank a liquid laced with cyanide, that he obtained from the chemistry lab, in which he was doing his doctorate work. He was possibly the brightest student in the chemistry program, he had been accepted into the most exclusive lab group, and his doctorate project was harder than anything the other students had chosen, so it was a shock to learn of his death. The news of his death, and the content of the three suicide notes he left, one to his parents, on to the Chair of Harvard's chemistry department,

and one to his student advisor, spread quickly. His advisor just happened to be world famous, Nobel laureate, Elias J. Corey. Corey was notorious for being one of the most strict professors in the department and he certainly had high expectations. The note Altom had left for his parents was eventually shared with a Harvard newspaper. It shocked his friends and fellow classmates by saying that his death could have been avoided. Altom's note stated that his student advisor, Corey, had had too much control over his future. He wanted Harvard to set up a new system which would distribute the power to other key people and he wanted a committee set up to monitor the quality of life for graduate students. At Harvard, the student advisor watches over the student as the student does his doctorate work. In the end, it is almost solely the advisor who decides whether or not a student gets a diploma. Another power student advisors have is recommendation. Without a letter of recommendation from from someone many students find it harder to get jobs once they have graduated. Since their student advisor is the only person who regularly monitors their work, the student advisor is usually the only one qualified to write a letter of recommendation. In this system it is easy to see how a student could feel over whelmed by the power his student advisor had over him and dismayed if he perceived some ill will between the two. Altom had been having trouble in the final stages of his doctoral work. He had chosen an especially challenging project for himself. He had to synthesize to different molecules and then bond them together. He had completed in synthesizing both molecules, but could not successfully bond them together. Apparently, Altom felt that Corey was unhappy with his progress. He had shared his concerns with some friends, but no one knew the magnitude of his anxiety. Obviously, none of them ever thought he would go to the extent he did and many wonder if this incident should be a warning to us. Harvard and other top schools, where the pressure is intense, have begun to implement changes to counteract several recent deaths, similar to Jason Altom's. The stress he felt, as one of the brightest students, at arguably the best school in the country, should give some insight into what other students, who perhaps have a harder time keeping up.

Causes of Academic Stress

Many students enter school excited about being in _college_. When registering, they try to sign up for classes they like and that meet their graduation and financial aid requirements. Once classes start, students map out assignment due dates and do their best to keep up with the <u>work</u>. In practice, however, doing quality work and turning it on time is a challenge that can easily lead to stress, especially when unforeseen events occur.

Features

Teachers expect work to be completed on time. Students may underestimate the amount of time it takes to complete reading and writing assignments, to print out copies of their work, or to <u>travel</u> to school. Missing deadlines, regardless of the reason, is stressful, especially because missing work leads to falling behind. Even

well-prepared students will experience stress, especially if they spend a lot of time on assignments but do not receive the grade they expected.

Significance

While many students will experience school-related stress, it is the ability to cope with the stress that matters. Some consequences of stress are mild, such as occasionally losing a few hours of sleep or skipping a meal while trying to meet a deadline. Serious negative consequences can also occur, however. Stress lowers immunity. It can cause insomnia, especially when sleep is interrupted, inconsistent, or too short. Some students try to relieve stress with drinking alcohol or taking drugs.

Identification

Stressed people get sick more often. They are more likely to overreact to small annoyances, such as waiting in line. While some stressed-out students may sleep more than usual, others may not be able to relax at all and may get only four hours per night. Feeling upset, anxious or short-tempered for no apparent reason is a stress reaction. Increases in the number and severity of allergies and asthma attacks are also related to stress.

Prioritizing

While in school, students have to meet many different types of responsibilities. Label priorities A, B and C. Those that are an A priority are those that are worth the most points, such as studying for a mid-term exam or writing a research paper. Assignments that might be a B priority are credit/no credit work, which means students will receive credit just for turning something in. Assign a C to a friend's sudden request for help with homework.

Prevention and Solutions

There are a few things you can do to control the impact of academic stress on your life. Organize how you use your time. Schedule assignment due dates, and begin work a week in advance, an adjustment that can accommodate technological malfunctions and breaks. Remain involved with activities and people you enjoy, including exercise, family and friends. Allow time to be completely unproductive, for this allows you to recharge and reduces stress.

Academic emotions have largely been neglected by educational psychology, with the exception of test anxiety. In 5 qualitative studies, it was found that students experience a rich diversity of emotions in academic settings. Anxiety was reported most often, but overall, positive emotions were described no less frequently than negative emotions. Based on the studies in this article, taxonomies of different academic emotions and a self-report instrument measuring students' enjoyment, hope,

pride, relief, anger, anxiety, shame, hopelessness, and boredom (Academic Emotions Questionnaire [AEQ]) were developed. Using the AEQ, assumptions of a cognitive-motivational model of the achievement effects of emotions, and of a control/value theory of their antecedents (Pekrun, 1992b, 2000), were tested in 7 cross-sectional, 3 longitudinal, and 1 diary study using samples of university and school students. Results showed that academic emotions are significantly related to students' motivation, learning strategies, cognitive resources, self-regulation, and academic achievement, as well as to personality and classroom antecedents. The findings indicate that affective research in educational psychology should acknowledge emotional diversity in academic settings by addressing the full range of emotions experienced by students at school and university.

In becoming stressed, people must make two main judgments: First, they must feel threatened by the situation; and second, they must doubt that they can meet the threat. How stressed they feel depends on the damage they think the situation can do them, and how closely their resources meet the demands of the situation.

Perception is key to this. Being precise, situations are not stressful in their own right - rather it is our interpretation of the situation that drives the level of stress that we feel.

Quite obviously, sometimes we are right in what we say to ourselves. Some situations may actually be dangerous, and may threaten us physically, socially or in our career. Here, stress and emotion are part of the early warning system that alerts us to the threat from these situations.

Often, however, we are wrong. It's easy to be overly harsh and unjust to ourselves in a way that we would never be with friends or co-workers. This, along with other negative thinking, can cause intense stress and unhappiness and can severely undermine self-confidence.

How Negative Thinking Undermines Performance?

Not only do these inappropriate negative thoughts cause a great deal of unhappiness, they also reduce our performance.

One obvious part of this comes from the mental effort wasted in worrying. This is particularly important when we are focusing on a task in which we need to perform well. Here, negative and anxious thinking compete with task-related thoughts for the attentional capacity of our conscious mind, disrupting the state of flow in which we perform at our best.

This is shown reliably in study after study, in sector after sector. A particularly good example of this is with students' academic performance:

"Anxiety also sabotages academic performance of all kinds: 126 different studies of more than 36,000 people found that the more prone to worry a person is, the poorer their academic performance, no matter how measured.…
In a test, non-worriers were asked to worry for 15 minutes – their ability to do a task reduced measurably. When worriers were relaxed for 15 minutes, their ability to do a task improved radically."

Anxiety and Meta-Performance, Bertha Seipp, "Anxiety and Academic Performance, A Meta-analysis", Anxiety Research 4,1 (1991) (cited in <u>*Emotional Intelligence*</u>*, Daniel Goleman, 1996, Bloomsbury Publishing, London).*

Negative Thinking and Health

Not only does negative thinking affect your performance, it also affects your health. People who approach the stresses of life with depression, anxiety and hostility experience significantly worse health. This is in direct contrasted with people who showed stress "hardiness". These people manage to survive intense stress with little illness. Hardiness is characterized by positive attitude to challenges, positive thinking and commitment to goals, among other things.

We can see this in the following quote and the study that followed:

Patients are also taught to examine their mental and emotional responses and to restructure them in a non-stressful way.... Those on the behavior modification group learned how to recognize their exaggerated physiological, mental and behavioral reactions to stressful situations. They were taught how to relax physically and mentally, as an alternative response. Lectures, demonstrations, role-playing and behavioral drills helped them develop new, non-Type A skills."

In this study conducted over a four-year period, the group of patients who had modified their behavior experienced half the number of heart attacks of the group who had not modified their behavior.

This section provides powerful tools that help you to rationally understand the negative thinking that causes so much stress. This helps you to identify either where you need to take action, or where you are being unduly negative.

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