

# CAUSE BEHIND DECLINING ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE: STRESS AMONG STUDENTS

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**Abstract:** Students' role is vital in the growth of nation. If they are developed well psychologically and physically they may lead to develop the country. Stress, anxiety and tension are the terms which can shift the happiness of any being into serious mental and physical issues. The integration of these terms in student's life can affect them unfavourably in every aspect, thereby affecting their academic performance. Stress among students' can arise due to various constraints that may include exam fear, interpersonal relationships, environment and their outlook. These factors directly affect the students psychologically and academically. Stress level on students has been found one of the very important variables related to academic performance which is required to live a sustainable and happy life. The present study is conducted to pick out the constraints that affect the stress level of students. This research was based on 408 students belonging private and government colleges that includes undergraduates, post graduates and Ph.D. scholars from different organizations of Delhi/NCR. Study was designed through mixed sequential method and data analysis was conducted through descriptive and inferential statistics, correlation and regression analysis.

**Keywords - Stress; academic performance; sustainable life; academic environment; environment change.**

## I. INTRODUCTION

Stress [1] is the psychological imbalance [2] which leads to discomfort and tension [3]. It is directly affected by the psychological, physiological and environmental surrounding of an individual. Stress has a deep bond with emotional, physical and mental health [4] [5]. Expecting a lot from self can cause stress, it is a threatening feeling of strain and pressure (Cohen et al., 1997). It has already spread its roots in life of almost every community, but the greatest affect is found on student community [6]. It has been reported that there is an increase in the stress level of students which is causing stressful environment all around (Sax, 1997) [7]. In a recent research it has been observed that majority of students—68 percent—experienced an academic setback due to stress (Youki Terada, 2018). Psychologists assert that moderate stress motives individuals to achieve and implement their creativity, although it is also verifiable that stress may hinder individual's performance [8] on the strenuous task (Nelson & Simmons, 2003). Stress varies from person to person depending on their past life experiences, behaviour and handling strategies. Some Psychologists argued that stress is not a problem but the actual problem is how to handle it. If we are not handling it well then it will cause problems otherwise it won't cause any problem. And if we will not handle it properly it will seriously affect our behaviour and thoughts (Centre 2010). The constraints influencing it at academics may include Fear of failure, Interpersonal difficulties [9], Teacher pupil relationship, Relationship with peers and inadequate study facilities.

Students may feel stress due to unrealistic expectations [10], future worries, fear, competition and cultural change. Stressing over minute situations can result adversely as it may make stressed person realize that situation is beyond its abilities and it may make perception that we can't handle it (Centre 2010).

The paper would consider following headings, bifurcated as:

- Provides the constraints that are associated with the stress among students academic life. (Section II)
- Provides an analytical study considering the measures picked for examining the stress level of students affecting their academic performance. (Section III)
- Provides the correlation between stress and its various constraints. (Section IV)
- Provides the outcome of the research gained on the basis of statistical analysis. (Section V)
- Includes the conclusion for overall study. (Section VI)
- Explores the suggestions which can be made to control the stress among students life. (Section VII)

The further classification for the paper can be best described in the following manner: Section II, discusses about the various determinants which are responsible for causing stress among student's academic life in either way; Section III and IV, shows the complete data in form of table and chart so that the correlated constraints can be found more accurately in a much efficient manner; Section V and VI, includes the overall conclusion made on the basis of study conducted; Section VII, exposes the suggestions made in order to control the effect of responsible factors, thereby, making an effort to provide a sustainable life to the youth.

## II. CONSTRAINTS OF ACADEMIC STRESS

Students is the most valuable segment of the society as the future of any country lies directly in their hands only. The stress on students can directly affect their academic performance [11] as well as their cognitive behavior [12] which may leads to decline in their quality of living life. While unfolding various factors that can cause stress in the life of students, we have to perceive that every being bear different outlook to handle stress due to which their degree of stress feeling differs. The degree of stress varies from one person to another even in the same situation. Some people may start to feel negative with very little of unfavorable aspect and situation and others who are very strong and secure background may not fell stress as much in same situations and conditions and working loads. It is an outcome of different factors like:

- **Fear of failure:** Students are experiencing a constant struggle due to the fear of failure [13] because of excessive amount of work and pressure [14]. The fear of getting good grades, achieving positions and performing well in every aspect of life are really stressing them.
- **Interpersonal difficulties:** Students often get stressed due to interpersonal aspects such as forming new friends, fitting well in society, and getting along with roommates [15].
- **Teacher pupil relationship:** Improved teachers' pupil relationship is required to provide essential Supports for learning and developing students academically as well as socially. It has been observed that those students who have close, positive and supportive relationships with their teachers attain a higher levels of achievement than those students who have conflict in their relationships because such students receives more constructive guidance and praise rather than just criticism from their teacher.
- **Relationship with peers [16] :**The quality of students' relationships with peers directly affects the stress level of students as high-quality peer relationships boosts academic Self-perceptions, motivation, reinforcement, learning and performance.
- **Inadequate study facilities:** Facility to study is an important predictor of students' stress. The physical and emotional health of students depends on the quality of the facilities provided to them, which makes establishing safe and healthy environment.
- **Competition:** Competition is a natural and often healthy element of human nature. It provides motivation [17] to students but sometimes it adds a significant amount of unnecessary stress for them and for others too. The feeling of competition may leads to mental stress among them.
- **Future Goals:** Setting up future goals and then achieving them are challenging tasks in today's scenario as most of the youth is not well aware about their own qualities and capabilities.
- **Environment Change:** Change in environmental factors [18] like Crowd, Air quality, Water, Food are environmental stressors. They cause irritation and discomfort. Sometimes these factors let the students drop their future goals and compromise with their study.
- **Placement issues:** It has become a potential source of stress [19] among students as many students join different courses only with an intention to achieve better placement with good corporate companies. Thinking much about this aspect make students worried about their future which naturally stress them.
- **Lack of confidence:** Confidence [20] defines people's judgment of their capability to perform specific tasks. If one experiences favorable outcomes confidence increases but if experiences are unfavorable [21] then students consider themselves as failures, thereby declining their confidence and enhancing their stress level.
- **Academic environment:** Lack of good academic facilities [22] such as infrastructure, laboratories, instructional space and libraries are also considered as stressors for students.
- **Curriculum:** Curriculum is designed to help students develop interconnected pathways within a discipline but vast curriculum acts as a stressor to students because sometimes it is difficult to cover it all at once.
- **Examination:** Examinations are stressful [23], but the degree of this stress differs from one student to another. Examination stress is subject-specific as described by students.

### III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The sample research element is the respondent base in NCR region. The sample size for the study was 445 out of which 408 respondents validated the study. In accordance to the subjectivity of this study, an analysis is done. We have restricted our study to certain parameters and elements in due consideration of personal issues due to time and resource constraints. For the purpose of this project, convenience sampling [24] was used and a well-structured questionnaire was framed to collect the primary data from the selected sample respondents. Secondary information was collected from various sources like website, articles, magazines, newspapers and journals. The statistical and inferential tools used for the study are correlation and regression analysis.

#### 3.1. objectives Of The Study

- 3.1.1. To study the interrelation of various academic stressors on the academic performance of students (competition, examination, curriculum, peer relationship, teacher pupil relationship).
- 3.1.2. To expose the constraints which are affecting the performance of students due to stress.
- 3.1.3. To expose the cardinal factors that should be altered to provide a sustainable environment, this is vital for mental health of students.

#### 3.2. Hypotheses Of The Study

Most of the hypotheses are developed based on the

Common observations, this study also assumes the following hypotheses regarding the academic stress among the students. The assumptions are as follows.

Hypothesis NO 1

H1: Placement issue is a biggest cause of stress among students.

Hypothesis NO 2

H2: Examination stress is among highest degree of stressors among students.

Hypothesis NO 3

H3: The social interaction issues (teacher pupil relationship, peer relationship and interpersonal difficulties) are moderate stressors for students.

Hypothesis NO 4

H4: Academic environment also plays a vital role as a stressor among students.

### 3.3. Instrument

The questionnaire comprised of two parts, the first part was used to quantify the effects of different factors as stressors on students. The first part of the questionnaire was designed to expose the demographic factors like age, type of education (Regular, Correspondence or Distance), type of course (Traditional, Professional or Vocational), gender, grades acquired at different level of education. The second section included the questions about social stressors, academic stressors, and personal stressors. The questions of various stressors were also included in the questionnaire. The alpha range was 0.901 that is adequate. The Likert scale [25] was used to get the response indicating a score of 1 for strongly disagree, 2 for disagree, 3 for undecided, 4 for agree and 5 for strongly agree.

### 3.4. Demographics Frequency Table

The demographic information of the individual's sample is given in Table 1. The compositions of respondents are included in the demographic section of the questionnaire. Majority of students aged 17 to 22 years are included in the sample because above 17 is an age where individual is not considered as minor. Moreover, this is an age when parents left their young ones to live without supervision allowing them to do efforts to fulfill their desires. The sample also consists of other age groups. The female are greater than the male in the sample. The population consists of Undergraduate students, post graduates, diploma pursuing as well as M.Phil. and PhD pursuing individuals. Most of the individual's in sample are undergraduates, pursuing traditional courses through regular classes; its frequency is maximum among all.

Table 1: demographic information of the sample.

Description	Frequency	%
<b>Age</b>		
17- 22	120	29.4
22 – 27	116	28.4
27 – 32	54	13.2
32 – 37	96	23.5
36 – 42	22	5.4
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	180	44.1
Female	228	55.9
<b>Pursuing</b>		
Diploma	64	15.7
Graduation	165	40.4
Master	142	34.8
M.Phil / PhD	37	9.1
<b>Type of Education</b>		
Regular	193	47.3
Correspondence	131	32.1
Distance	84	20.6
<b>Type of Course</b>		
Traditional	211	51.7
Professional	197	48.3

## IV. STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

To meet the objectives the statistical analysis was done on the data gathered. The statistical tools used were: descriptive and inferential statistics, correlation and regression analysis [26].

The table below shows the correlation between stress and its various constraints calculated after implementing the statistical analysis on the data obtained for N=408 respondents.

In accordance with the survey conducted mostly students agreed that the fear of failure(not only in examinations) is the foremost factor which is responsible for causing the stress among their trouble free life; whereas, the Academic environment is the investigated as the least hindrance creating factor among their unruffled life. It has been found that students do not pay much attention to the academic environment if all other factors are in accordance. The correlation between Fear of failure and stress has been analyzed 0.497. Examination (0.482) is another important factor which is highly correlated with the stress level of students. Environment change (0.445) and Interpersonal difficulties (0.403) are also found to have positive implications with stress among students. Curriculum (0.256) and Academic environment (0.214) are found to be the least impacting factors on the stress level of students towards their academic excellence.

Table 2: correlation between academic stress and its various components

Component	Value
Fear of Failure	0.497
Interpersonal Difficulties	0.403
Teacher Pupil Relationship	0.396
Relationship with Peers	0.301
Inadequate Study Facilities	0.295
Competition	0.385
Future Goals	0.397
Environment Change	0.445
Placement Issues	0.394
Lack of Confidence	0.335
Academic Environment	0.214
Curriculum	0.256
Examination	0.482

## V. SURVEY FINDINGS

On the basis of above survey so conducted, all the factors are to be considered through the test, shown in Table 1, 2. The factors that are most encountered in any issue related to causing stress among students are Fear of failure, Examination, Environmental change and Interpersonal difficulties.

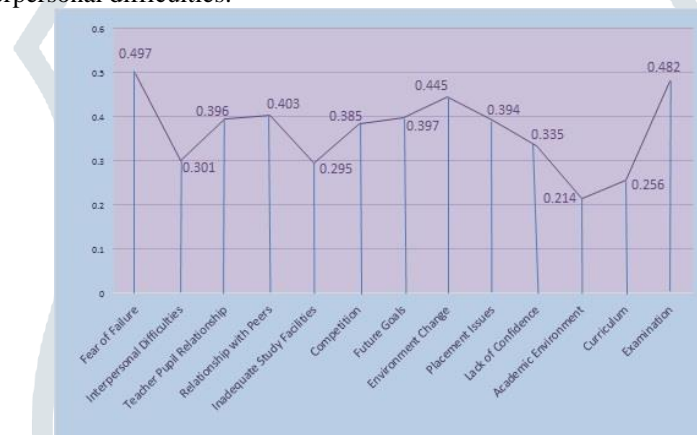


Fig.1. open source factor analysis for correlated factors.

The compiled analysis for finding the most relevant factor that are best fit for this survey are represented by fig. 1. It is found that the fear of failure has greatest relation with Stress among students, every individual wants to live a happy and successful life, which can provide high credibility to their psychological, emotional and financial needs. Students are the source of development as the future of country lies in their hands only. They should be engaged in productive means every time and should not have any scope for any kind of stress; stress definitely engages their mind in creating a negative approach which could hinder their peace of mind. Second highly correlated factor is Examination; Almost every student experience some amount of stress during exams but; its escalation could affect the student psychologically, socially, emotionally as well as cognitively which could be ruinous. Environment change is one of the major factors affecting the academic excellence of students as most of the students experienced that when they have to step outside their comfort zone to pursue higher education, the change in air, water and environment creates hinder in the adapting the new culture; as it needs great efforts to adapt new culture after a certain period of time. Another factor is Interpersonal difficulties; these are the common issues but human being a social creature aspires to live a happy life in a sustainable environment [27], [28]. These problematic behaviors and thoughts can link up to create a very negative impact on student's ability to be social and healthy (mentally as well as physically), it may divert their mind to a great extent, thereby, impacting their academic excellence. Being enjoying good interpersonal relationships they may feel motivated, confident and healthy resulting in creating various opportunities for themselves and for their surrounding too. Other relevant factor is Teacher pupil relationship, this factors rigorously depends upon various other factors and it is the most misunderstood factor in the academic terms.

Social Relationship (Relationship with teachers and peers) is one of the emerging need to be rectified as soon as possible, because every being desires to enjoy healthy relations with others in personal as well as in academic life but during the study it has been observed that students today are not enjoying healthy relationships with each other and with their faculties impacting their lives psychologically as well as academically.

Competition, future goals, lack of confidence and placement issues also affect the academic performance of students due to stress as these factors are related with new opportunities and challenges as well as success and security of earning livelihood. Every student works hard to get a satisfactory future, this is the only ultimate goal of every being. Some students adjust very well with the surroundings keeping in view their aim but they lag behind just because of these factors.

Least affecting factors can be inadequate study facilities, curriculum and academic environment. Generally, it has been observed that academic environment is the major concern of students at the time of selecting institutions but during study it has been analyzed that students do not pay much concern to it, accepting it to be the part of cultural change and then engaging

themselves in arranging those missing resources outside the institutions. We can't ignore these factors just because they have least value. These factors are also responsible for causing stress among students but not to a greater extent.

## VI. CONCLUSION

The study was conducted to find out the most affecting factor responsible for causing stress among student's life and its effect on their academic performance. The causing factors are fear of failure, examination, environmental change and interpersonal difficulties. Other factors are social relationships, competition, future goals, placement issues and lack of confidence which are moderate in effect. Inadequate study facilities, academic environment and curriculum are found to have least impact on the academic performance of students. The H1 indicates that placement issue plays a prominent role in causing stress among students but on the basis of the study conducted H1 is not acceptable as it has been found that this factor has moderate effect in creating hindrance in life of students. In contrast to this, H2 is acceptable and it has been found that examination is among highest degree of stressors. H3; which is related to social interaction issues is partially acceptable as it has three different factors out of which two (teacher pupil and peer relationship) have moderate effect as indicated by H3, whereas interpersonal difficulties is one of the highest stress cause factor among students. H4; is completely rejected as according to study academic environment is one of the least stressors that can affect the academic performance of students.

## VII. SUGGESTIONS

It can be concluded from the study that fear of failure, examination, environmental change and interpersonal difficulties are significantly responsible for causing stress and they adversely affect the academic performance of students. Controlling and monitoring these factors are not in the hands of institution (although they affect academic performance); institute can only help the students by arranging guest lectures and seminars on motivation and positive outlook instead self-motivation and family can play a vital role in controlling and modulating these factors; students should be well focused and well aware about their needs and the need of their surroundings, if anything feels like disturbing them psychologically they should immediately switch to reading motivational books and articles. They should engage themselves in practicing meditation and exercise (yoga)[29] as well. Family should take care of their children as if they are nurtured righteously they can grow like a huge herbaceous plant; thereby leading a happy, successful and sustainable life free from stress and anxiety but if not then can erupt like a volcano. Parents should take care of the thoughts of their children, they should immediately correct them whenever they observe that their mind is not creating constructive thoughts; pressurizing them for grades or for achieving anything is not a good process this may lead to creation of negative thoughts, ideas and behaviour instead they should use motivating, positive and achieving words which would help in uplifting their inner ability; thereby, creating a positive outlook [30], [31] toward society and environment. In the light of above results it is, therefore, recommended that in order to enhance the academic performance, students should be kept free from stress and they should be nurtured so forbearingly and positively so that is no scope in their life for any fear and failure.

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