



# A study on Academic Stress among Undergraduate students in Hyderabad District

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## Abstract

In today's highly competitive world, students face various academic problems including exam stress, disinterest in attending classes and the inability to understand a subject. Academic stress involves mental distress regarding anticipated academic challenges or failure or even the fear of the possibility of academic failure. So Stress has become part of students' academic life due to the various internal and external expectations placed upon their shoulders. The present study was conducted on Academic stress among undergraduate boys and girls. The main objectives of this study is to determine the level of academic stress among undergraduate students and also to study whether there is any difference in academic stress among boys and girls. The present study, the sample consist of 60 undergraduates, among them 30 are boys and other 30 are girls and have been chosen from two colleges through by simple random sampling technique. The data were collected through survey method; the data were analyzed by using statistical techniques such as mean, standard deviation and t-ratio. The results were indicating that there is moderate level of academic stress among undergraduate students. The results were also indicate that there is no significant difference between graduate boys and girls in their level of academic stress i.e. the boys and girls are experiencing the same level of academic stress. The results show the academic sources of stress appeared to be the most stressful for all the students due to the pressure originated from the course overloads, and the academic evaluation procedures.

**Keywords:** Stress, Academic stress, Undergraduate students

## Introduction

### Stress

Stress is viewed as a negative emotional, cognitive, behavioral and physiological process that occurs as a person tries to adjust to or deal with stressors (Bernstein, et al 2008). Stressors are defined as circumstances that disrupt, or threaten to disrupt, individuals' daily functioning and cause people to make adjustments (Auerbach & Grambling 1998). However, stress is perceived in different ways and may mean different thing to different individuals. It is perceived as events or situations that cause individuals to feel tension, pressure, or negative emotions including anxiety and anger. Moreover, other people define stress as the response to existing situations, which includes physiological changes (increased heart rate, and muscle tension), emotional and behavioural changes (Bernstein, et al 2008). Stress is always regarded as a psychological process that involves an individual's personal interpretation and response to any threatening event.

### Factors influencing stress

External demands-Family, Individual, Social, Environmental, Financial

Work/institution

Internal demands-Responsibility, Obligations and Self criticism

Vulnerability-Genetic predisposition, Coping skills and Lifestyle

Past experiences -A person's response to a stressor also varies depending on how much control that person thinks that he or she has over a situation

Chronic stress-Stressor that continue indefinitely or are recurrent

Major life events- Stressors that are bad for a period of time and then go away

Daily hassles-Un pleasant often temporary events

Symptoms/illness Attitudes/beliefs/values

### Types of stress

**1. Acute stress:** Acute stress is the most common type of stress. It's your body's immediate reaction to a new challenge, event, or demand, and it triggers your fight-or-flight response. As the pressures of a near-miss automobile accident, an argument with a family member or a costly mistake at work sink in, your body turns on this biological response.

**2. Episodic acute stress:** When acute stress happens frequently, it's called episodic acute stress. People who always seem to be having a crisis tend to have episodic acute stress. They are often short-tempered, irritable, and anxious. People who are "worry warts" or pessimistic or who tend to see the negative side of everything also tend to have episodic acute stress.

**3. Chronic stress:** If acute stress isn't resolved and begins to increase or lasts for long periods of time, it becomes chronic stress. This stress is constant and doesn't go away. It can stem from such things as: Poverty, a dysfunctional family, an unhappy marriage and a bad job.

### 1.2 Academic stress

The definition of academic stress is the anxiety and stress that comes from schooling and education. There is often a lot of pressure that comes along with pursuing a degree and one's education. There is studying, homework, tests, labs, reading, and quizzes. There is the stress of doing all of the work, balancing the time and finding time for extra-curricular activities. Academic stress is especially hard on school students who are often living away from home for the first time. 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.

#### 1.2.1 Academic stress among college students

Academic stress among students have long been researched on, and researchers have identified stressors as too many assignments, competitions with other students, failures and poor relationships with other students or lecturers (Fairbrother & Warn, 2003).

Academic stress involves mental distress regarding anticipated academic challenges or failure or even the fear of the possibility of academic failure. Academic stressors show themselves in many aspects in the students' environment: at school, home, in their peer relations and even in their neighborhood.

Excessive levels of academic stress can result in an increased prevalence of psychological and physical problems like depression, anxiety, nervousness and stress related disorders, which in turn can affect their academic results. Anxiety as a disorder is seen in about 8% of adolescents and children worldwide. Anxiety and stress have a substantial negative effect on their social, emotional and academic success. Depression is becoming the most common mental health problem college students suffer these days. It is also a reflection of an individual's academic frustration, academic conflict, academic anxiety and academic pressure. The four components of academic stress usually identifiable in a student are academic frustration, academic conflicts, academic anxieties and academic pressures.

Academic stressors include the student's perception of the extensive knowledge base required and the perception of an inadequate time to develop it (Carveth et al, 1996). Students report experiencing academic stress at predictable times each semester with the greatest sources of academic stress resulting from taking and studying for exams, grade competition, and the large amount of content to master in a small amount of time (Abouserie, 1994). When stress is perceived negatively or becomes excessive, students experience physical and psychological impairment.

Methods to reduce stress by students often include effective time management, social support, positive reappraisal, and engagement in leisure pursuits (Murphy & Archer, 1996). The pressure to perform well in the examination or test and time allocated makes academic environment very stressful (Erkutlu & Chafra, 2006). This is likely to affect the social relations both within the institution and outside which affects the individual person's life in terms of commitment to achieving the goals (Fairbrother & Warn, 2003).

## Review of the Literature

### Introduction

This chapter attempts to present a brief resume of research findings related to academic stress.

College students are very vulnerable group to experience stress, the latter of which is related to variety of outcomes, such as health and academic performance.

**Negga, Applewhitr, & Livingston (2007)** assessed the stress of African American college students. It was revealed that the top five reported sources of stress were: Death of a family member (Interpersonal stress) 82%; low grades (academic stress) 69%; time management (academic stress) 61%; boyfriend/girlfriend

problems (Interpersonal stress) 57%; and missed classes (academic stress) 55%. Furthermore, significant correlation between self-esteem, social support and stress for all students was found. The study pointed out the need for college and universities to develop stress intervention programs that address stress specifically based on race and school racial compositions.

**Leung (2007)** examined the moderating and mediating mechanisms through which parental support and children's resourcefulness might modify stress outcomes were investigated. Domain analysis was proved to be more sensitive to gender difference when compared with the global academic hassles measure. Girls were more disturbed by "academic inefficacy and fear of failure" and boys were more affected by "expectations and demands from significant others" and academic demands and overload".

**Putwain (2007)** studied the academic stress and anxiety in students. That is, academic stress in school children and how it may affect emotional well-being, health and performance on school assessments. In many cases stress is being used to refer to the properties of a stimulus (e.g. an examination) and in other cases to the subjective experience of distress.

**Shannon and Elizabeth (2008)** investigated the relationships among stress, coping, and mental health in 139 students participating in an International Baccalaureate (IB) high school diploma program. Results showed that students in an IB program perceived significantly more stress than a sample of 168 of their general education peers.

**Huan, See Ang and Har (2008)** explored the impact of adolescent concerns on their academic stress. The objective of this study was to examine the contributing role of the different aspects of adolescents concerns on the academic stress of youths in Singapore. The study examined the four different aspects of adolescents concerns namely: family, personal, peer and school concerns. Gender differences were also explored in terms of these predictions as well as the academic stress experienced by adolescents. Results showed that only the score on Personal; concerns subscale were positively associated with the academic stress arising from self and other expectations, in both adolescents boys and girls. For the girls, school-related concerns were also

predictive of academic stress arising from other expectations. They also obtained significantly higher scores on the academic expectations stress inventory than boys did.

**Bjorkman (2008)** conducted a study on the academic stress, social support, and internalizing and externalizing behaviors in samples of sixth, seventh, and eight grade students (n=268) from suburban Illinois. It was revealed that academic stress is the relevant construct to consider when examining the potential sources of stress that junior high students' experience, and girls and boys report similar level of academic stress. It appears to be related to internalizing problems similarly for girls and boys, though internalizing and externalizing behaviors are related to different sources of academic stress. Social support from parents and classmates was related to lower level of stress, and support from parents, teachers, and classmates was related to fewer internalizing problems in the current sample. The results of this study suggested that academic stress is a relevant construct to consider when investigating potential correlates of emotional and

behavioral problems. Academic stress was also related to social support, though social support did not act as a buffer in the present study. Early identifications, along with specific instruction of stress reducing skills, may be useful in preventing and remedying students' response to stress.

**Husain, Kumar and Husain (2008)** explored the level of academic stress and overall adjustment among Public and Government high school students and also to see relationship between the two variables (academic stress and adjustment). Results indicated that magnitude of academic stress was significantly higher among the Public school students where as Government school students were significantly better in terms of their levels of adjustment. However, inverse but significant relationships between academic stress and adjustment were found for both the group of students and for each type of school.

**Singh and Upadhyay (2008)** investigated academic stress in the context of age and sex differences among college students. The sample of the study was first year and third year male and female students (N= 400). Findings revealed that first year students experienced higher degree of academic stress in comparison of third year students. At the same time female students perceived more academic stress in comparison of their male counterpart. Attending university is a pleasurable experience for many students. Yet for others it represents a highly stressful time of extensive studying and pressure to meet the requirements of academia. Academic stress is associated with a variety of negative outcomes such as physical illness and deteriorating mental health.

**Leung, Yeung and Wong (2009)** examined the role of paternal support in the relation between academic stress and the mental health of primary school children in Hong Kong. The participants of this cross-

sectional study were 1,171 fifth and sixth graders. The results indicated that academic stress was a risk factor that heightened student anxiety levels and that parental emotional support was a protective factor that contributed to better mental health among children. However, parental informational support delivered to children during times of high academic stress appeared to heighten student anxiety levels.

**Marwan Zaid Bataineh (2013).** Academic stress among undergraduate students: the case of education faculty at King Saud University. This study investigated the academic stressors experienced by the students at university. A total sample of 232 subjects participated in this study were obtained from faculty of education at KSU. Data were collected through self-administered questionnaire which was randomly distributed to the students during lecture time. Data obtained were analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation, and analysis of variance (ANOVA). The result showed that academic overloads, course awkward, inadequate time to study, workload every semester, exams awkward, low motivation, and high family expectations were drive moderately stress among students. It was also found that fear of failure is the major source of stress among undergraduate students. Moreover, the study found that there were positive correlation between religiosity sources and academic stress ( $r = .300^{**}$ ,  $p = .00$ ). Lastly, the study found that there were no significant differences in academic stress among students with different, level of study and specializations.

**Rajasekar (2013).** Impact of academic stress among the management students of AMET university – An analysis. The study examined the impact of academic stress among the management students. Stress management encompasses techniques to equip a person with effective coping mechanisms for dealing with psychological stress. Students have different expectations, goals and values that they want to fulfill, which is only possible if they are integrated with that of the institution. The objective of the study is to find out the present level of stress, sources of stress and stress management techniques that would be useful for management students. The study takes into account various criteria like physical, psychological, individual, demographical and environmental factors of stress among the management students. The sample comprises of 100 students of AMET Business School, AMET University in Chennai. Data was collected through structured questionnaire by using convenient sampling method.

### Methodology

The present study was conducted on undergraduate students of Hyderabad. This study was administered as a **Descriptive Survey Method** of research where the data collected were statistically analyzed for further interpretations. Two undergraduate colleges were randomly selected. The sample includes 60 undergraduate students, 30 boys and 30 girls. Simple random technique was used for the study.

**Aim:** To study the gender difference in the level of academic stress of undergraduate students.

### Objectives of the study

1. To determine the level of academic stress among undergraduate students.
2. To study whether there is any difference in academic stress among undergraduate boys and girls students.

### Hypotheses of the study:

1. There will be moderate level of academic stress among undergraduate students.
2. There will be no significant difference between undergraduate boys and girls in their level of academic stress.

### Sample and Sampling technique

In the present study the sample consist of 60 undergraduates among them 30 are boys and 30 are girls. The sample for the research has been chosen from two undergraduate colleges in Hyderabad by simple random sampling.

### Tool used

The investigator of the present study selected and used the academic stress scale constructed and standardized by Kohn and Frazer (1986) for data collection.

### Description of academic stress scale

One of the important objectives of the present investigation is to find out the level of academic stress among undergraduate students for this purpose the investigator used the academic stress scale constructed and standardized by Kohn and Frazer (1986). This scale consists 33 items and each item has five alternative responses i.e. “Not at all Stress”, “Rarely Stressful”, “Sometime Stressful”, “Fairly Stressful” and “Extremely Stressful”.

### Procedure:

Consent was taken from the respondents to conduct the research on them. Then they were seated comfortably in a quiet place after developing a proper rapport. Subjects were given “academic stress scale” and instructions as follows.

Read each item and then select an answer to indicate how you rate the level of your stress under the situation.

Use “not at all stressful”, “rarely stressful”, “sometime stressful”, “fairly stressful” and “extremely stressful” to indicate various degree of stress level. “Not at all stressful” will be used to indicate that there is no stress under the situation (i.e. excessive hard work) and an extremely stressful will indicate that you have very strong stress under the situation. Of course there is no right or wrong answer to each item. So do not spend too much time on any one item but just check the one that indicates best how that statement generally describes you. The whole test was administered individually. The total time taken around 15-20 minutes to complete answering the test. After the collection of the data from respondents, the data is subjected to statistical analysis for results, interpretation and discussion.

### Statistical techniques used

For the analysis of the data, the following statistical techniques have been used.

- Descriptive analysis (Mean & S.D) and
- Differential analysis ('t' test)

### Data Analysis

#### Academic stress levels between undergraduate boys and girls

**Hypothesis -1:** There will be moderate level of Academic stress among undergraduate students

**Table – 1** Showing undergraduate boys and girls Academic stress with regard to different level.

Academic Stress Levels	Low	Moderate	High
Boys	6.6%	66.6%	26.6%
Girls	6.6%	76.6%	16.6%
Total	6.6%	71.6%	21.6%

### Interpretation:

Form the above table it is observed that, 6.6% of the girls students are having Low level of Academic Stress; 66.6% of the girls students are having Moderate level of Academic Stress and 26.6% of the girls students are having High level of Academic Stress. 6.6% of the boys students are having Low level of Academic Stress; 76.6% of the boys students are having Moderate level of Academic Stress and 16.6% of the boys students are having High level of Academic Stress. Overall, 6.6% of the graduate students are having Low level of Academic Stress; 71.6% of the graduate students are having Moderate level of Academic Stress and 21.6% of the graduate students are having High level of Academic Stress.

Graph - 1

Showing undergraduate boys and girls academic stress with regard to different level.



### Academic stress between Undergraduate Boys and Girls

**Hypothesis – 2:** There will be no significant difference between Undergraduate boys and girls in their level of Academic stress.

Table - 2

showing the mean, standard deviation and t score of Undergraduate boys and girls with regard to Academic Stress.

Academic Stress	N	Mean	S.D	t-value	P-value
Boys	30	90.36	8.21	0.016	0.4936
Girls	30	85.06	12.71		
Total	60				

**Interpretation:**

From the above table it can be revealed that the mean and S.D scores for Undergraduate boys and girls in Academic stress are 90.36, 8.21, 85.06 & 12.71 respectively. The obtained results are evident that there is insignificant difference between boys and girls with p value 0.4936.

Therefore, there is no significant difference in Academic stress of boys and girls students.

Hence, the formulated hypothesis is accepted.

Graph - 2

Showing the mean and standard deviation scores of Undergraduate boys and girls with regard to Academic Stress.



**Summary And Conclusion**

The present study reveals that the undergraduate students are having moderate level of academic stress. There is no significant difference in academic stress among undergraduate boys and girls, it indicates that boys and girls are experiencing same level of academic stress in different situations like final grades, examinations and missing class etc.

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