EVALUATION OF PERCEIVED STRESS LEVEL IN MANAGEMENT STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT:
In today's dynamic environment, stress is part and parcel of everyone's life irrespective of age, profession etc. In this context, the students who are aspiring professional courses are no exception to the same. These students undergo a lot of stress related to academics in terms of coping with the demands of the course. There is a lot of competition and students have to face a lot of challenges to prove themselves and excel in their performance. Moreover, it is not that they are focused only on academic performance. There are many students who face financial problems, relationship issues (family, friends etc.), adopting to new environment etc. All these different stressors negatively impact the academic performance of these students. This study aims to evaluate the perceived stress level among Management students. The study highlights that stress levels amongst female and male students is same.
KEYWORDS: Perceived Stress, Academic Performance, Management Students, Social life, Life Crisis

INTRODUCTION:

Stress:

Stress and anxiety have become pervading features of people's life in modern world. Despite tremendous advancements in science and technology, and remarkable growth of economy and sources of luxury, majority of people all over the world seem to be experiencing moderate to high degree of psychological stress in various spheres of their lives. Consistently increasing rate of psychosomatic and psychological disorders and feeling of frustration and dissatisfaction with life in general reflect the high stress being experienced by the people in the present day world. Not that people in societies in the past were entirely free from stress. People must have been experiencing stress right since the origin of structured societies. However, the causes of stress in those societies were episodic in nature, and low in severity and frequency. But during last two decades frequency, severity and span of psycho-social stress have drastically increased. The basic reason being the tremendously changed physical and socio-cultural environment of the contemporary societies, and lifestyle of the people. People's life in contemporary societies has become more diversely demanding, complicated, mechanical and dependent, and is running by the clock. Ever increasing needs and aspirations, high competition, pressures of meeting deadlines and uncertainty of future and weakened social support system have made the life of majority of people highly stressful in modern societies. This is the reason; the term stress and research in its causes, consequences, and management have reached the peak of popularity in recent times.

Selye (1956) popularized the term 'stress' in his writings on "General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS)". He defined stress as "non-specific responses to all types of internal or external demands made on the body. The GAS has three stages, i.e. alarm, resistance and collapse. The alarm stage is the body's initial response to stressor, e.g. increase heart rate

and blood pressure and release of glucose to provide energy for action. If the stress is prolonged, the stage of resistance emerges. The process of homeostasis comes into play at this stage. The body tries to maintain equilibrium. There is continuing effort to adapt to the stressor during this stage. The body cannot go on coping with stress indefinitely. The third stage of collapse is characterized by a loss of resistance to the stressor, and exhaustion, collapse and even death can occur.

Stressors:
Stress can arise from many sources including the family, the individual, social environmental conditions and the organisation. Stressors from these sources can work independently or collectively. Stressors can be broadly classified as -

(I)   Individual Stressors – Sources of pressure at work evoke different reaction from different people. Some people are better able to cope with these stressors while some are not. The factors which contribute to these differences include –

(i)   Personality – Research shows that several personality dimensions such as authoritarianism, rigidity, extroversion, tolerance, anxiety, locus of control, self-efficacy can be related to stress. Friedman and Rosenman (1974) characterized personality behaviour exhibited by the individual into two types – Type A and Type B personality. Type A people are aggressive, competitive, impatient, set high standards and put themselves under constant time pressures. Whereas, Type B personality is more relaxed and easy going. Individuals having Type A personality are more prone to stress and have an increased chance of heart disease.

(ii)   Belief of Locus of Control – A person's perception of the source of his/her fate is termed as Locus of Control. Those with internal locus of control believe that they control their own destiny. While those with an external locus of control believe their lives are controlled by outside forces and what happens to them is due to luck or chance. Externals are more likely to feel helpless in stressful situations and experience stress.

(iii)   Self-Efficacy –Another important dimension that has recently been identified as a factor to individual stress relates to self-efficacy. There is an increasing evidence that people's self perception of their capacity to be effective and bring about change may be an important disposition in the ability to withstand stress. Bandura (1985) has found that those with high self-efficacy have a relatively low level of physiological arousal.

(II)   Life Stressors – The second set of non-work stressors relate to intensely personal problems that relate to the individuals unique history. These include –

(i)   Life Changes – These are incidents which require a coping response of some magnitude such as divorce, marital separation, and jail term, injury, being fired from work, business readjustments, changes in work hours/conditions and various other changes.

(ii)   Life Passages – Each individual personality continues to evolve throughout the life time and during this period there occurs certain stable as well as critical turning points. The turning points require changes in attitudes, since every new problem will have to be solved with a new solution. This results in stress.

(iii)   Life Crises – Is a radical change of status in a person's life taking on emergency proportions and potentially leading to a catastrophe. These depend on individual cognition and appraisal because what one individual sees as a radical change, another individual will take in stride. Also the same individual at a different time in life will react differently to vary similar conditions. Lazarus (1971) believes the affects of dramatic events of life have

been over estimated and the daily hassles that are more frequent play a greater role as stressors.

Effects of Stress:
The stress reaction affects the individual in three ways –

(i)   Physiological Effects – The physiological response to perceive stress is an integrated set of bodily functions all directed at preparing the body to respond to the stressor. When stress is dealt with a positive way, the body restores itself and repairs any damage caused by the stress. However, most of the time people don't deal with stress in a positive way. Thus stress related tensions build up and with no outlet, takes its toll on the body. The possible health consequences of job stress are – cardiovascular disease, gastro-intestinal disorders, bodily injuries, skin disorders, physical strain or fatigue and death.

(ii)   Psychological Effects – The mind's reaction to stress is harder to predict. The prominent problems affecting person's life as well as job related behaviour of an individual includes –anger, anxiety, depression, fear, nervousness, irritability, tension and boredom.

(iii)   Behavioural Effects – Any factor that exerts powerful effects upon basic bodily processes and internal psychological states would normally be expected to affect the overt behaviour of an individual. These effects can be in the form of changes in productivity, changes in eating habits, increased smoking or consumption of alcohol, rapid speech, fidgeting sleep disorders, absence and turnover.

Scope of the Study:
The present study focuses on the stress in Management students in selected institutes in Pune city. The study was designed to gain a better understanding of the stress level experienced by management students.

Objectives of the Study:
1. To evaluate the degree of stress in Management students.
2. To examine the association of demographics and perceived stress level.

Limitations of the Study:
1. The study was carried out amongsome Management students in Pune.
2. There is an inherent limitation in all the researches on behavioral sciences since the attitude of respondents may differ from time to time.

Hypotheses:
1. Stress level is same across male and female students.
2. There is a significant association between gender of student and perceived stress level.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:
Review of Studies relating to Stress in Students:
Many researchers have carried out studies on stress and its outcomes and have concluded that this topic needs more attention. Stress in academic institutions can have both positive and negative consequences if not well managed (Stevenson & Harper, 2006). Academic institutions have different work settings compared to nonacademic and therefore one would expect the difference in symptoms, causes, and consequences of stress (Chang & Lu, 2007). It is important to the society that students should learn and acquire the

necessary knowledge and skills that will in turn make them contribute positively to the development of the general economy of any nation. It is important for the institutions to maintain well balanced academic environment conducive for better learning, with the focus on the students' personal needs. Students have different expectations, goals, and values that they want to fulfill, which is only possible if the students' expectations, goals, and values are integrated with that of the institution (Goodman, 1993).

Academic stress among students includes too many assignments, competitions with other students, failures and poor relationships with other students or lecturers (Fairbrother & Warn, 2003), 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 asmall amount of time (Abouserie, 1994). Other potential sources of stress include excessive homework, unclear assignments, and uncomfortable classrooms (Kohn & Frazer, 1986). In addition to academic requirements, relations with faculty members and time pressures may also be sources of stress (Sgan-Cohen & Lowental, 1988).

In recent times, students encounter all kinds of stressors, such as that of excelling in academics, vague future and problems associated with adapting into the college environment. The learning abilities and academic outcomes of these students are affected when they encounter challenges such as social, emotional, physical and family problems. (Fish & Nies, 1996, Chew et al., 2003) According to Feld 2011, the most important stressors encountered by students include high individual and external expectations, and stressful surroundings as well as academic motivators such as academic tasks, ranks and college recognition. Students believe that they would practice an improved way of life if these challenges were removed. Babar et al 2004 found out that the most dominant stressors were that of academics and examinations. The subject of academic stress and college students has been in the limelight for several years. During every semester, at specific periods college students experience pressure due to academic engagements and responsibilities, economic hardships and improper time management skills. Health and academic accomplishments can both be hampered if stress levels are very high and if stress is negatively perceived. (Campbell & Svenson, 1992).Womble, 2003 studied various factors that can weaken a student's academic achievements. These factors included societal activities, job demands or romantic relationships which can take away valuable time. In India, the factors responsible for the outcomes such as emotional stress and internalized problems are due to elevated levels of academic and social stress. (Verma et al. 2002, Krishnakumar et al. 2005, Lai & Wong 1992). While students stress has often been linked in the literature to family problems, similar results were found in studies by other researchers that students learning ability and academic accomplishments were affected by family problems(Fish et al 1996;Chew et al, 2003)

Social support from the university, family, friends and mentors create an enormous impact on student's achievement and performance. Likewise, emotional, academic and financial aids are incredible factors which ascertain the success of college students.

College life can be stressful and alter the life experience of a student, it is therefore vital to be in the company of family and friends while being in college. (Trockel et al. 2000) Shaikh et al 2004, also reports that relationship problems both at home and in college often contributes to stress. As stated by Greenberg (1996) making new friends is one of the

causative factors of stress amongst college students. Besides making new friends, it is often seen that transforming and building new friendship is a stressful situation highly related with college life.

An individual's self-esteem is enhanced through academic excellence and accomplishments, states that academic achievement is influenced by self- esteem. Studies conducted by Dennis et al., (2005) and Nicpon et al., (2006) clearly determines that students who are socially inactive tend to be more isolated, attain low grades and are more at risk of withdrawing from college. A decline in the academic performance and adjustment is seen among students who are lonely and socially inactive in college thus making them unable to utilize the social resources available in the campus. Pinto et al. 2001; Ross et al. 1999 and St. John, 1998, documented a decline in academic performance as a result of financial stress. However, Mehta, et al., (2011) suggested that financial stress is not the only determining factor of poor academic performance.

According to Kadapatti & Vijayalaxmi 2012, stressors like academics; social, emotional and financial has an impact on the academic achievements of a college student. Results of an Indian study revealed that factors associated with curriculum and workloads combined with economic deprivation are accountable for academic stress. Low academic achievement of some students can be a consequence of improper time management, economic hardships, lack of sleep,and societal engagements .This is also seen in students with children. (Maheshwari & Deepa 2013)

RESEARCH DESIGN:
Research Methodology:
1. Using structured questionnaire data was collected using google forms.
2. Secondary data was collected by referring to various research papers in various journals, thesis, books and websites related to the topic of research.

Sample Description:
Random sampling method has been used in the study.
The questionnaire was designed using google formand was circulated to 250 management students located in Pune, out of which, 220 questionnaires were completed, giving 88% return rate.

Description of Tool:
A demographic questionnaire to gain background information [Name (Optional), Gender, Name of Institute] was used.
The next part of the instrument consisted of Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) designed by Cohen et.al. (1983). This scale has 10 items, in which 6 items (1,2,3,6,9 and 10) are true-keyed whereas remaining 4 items (4,5,7 and 8) are false-keyed. Five-point Likert scale which signifies 0-Never, 1-Almost Never, 2-Sometimes, 3-Fairly Often and 4-Very Often for true-keyed items and vice-versa for false-keyed items.

Techniques of Data Analysis:
The statistical processing of data is presented in terms of quantitative procedures and statistical techniques. The SPSS statistical programme SPSS 24.0 was used for this purpose. To test the hypotheses, one-way Anova, Crosstabs were also used. To simplify the interpretation of data, the data analyzed was presented through tables and graphs.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

The demographic details show that the percentage of male students participating in the study is 78% and that of female students is 35.5%. Theperceived stress level is high in 6.4% students. The level is moderate in 80.5% students and low in 13.2% students. It can be interpreted that students stress is substantially moderate and needs to be managed properly to lower the level.

Hypotheses Testing:
Hypothesis No.1:
Stress level is same across male and female students.
For testing the above mentioned hypothesis One-way ANOVA test was used. The independent variable being gender and the dependent variable is stress level.

Table No. 1.1 – Descriptives for ANOVA test

Descriptives								
G								
			Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
	N	Mean			Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Low	29	1.45	.506	.094	1.26	1.64	1	2
Moderate	177	1.32	.466	.035	1.25	1.39	1	2
High	14	1.64	.497	.133	1.36	1.93	1	2
Total	220	1.35	.479	.032	1.29	1.42	1	2

The Descriptive Statistics table given above shows the number of respondents, mean and standard deviation and confidence interval for each category of age across three condition rows.

Table No. 1.2 – ANOVA

ANOVA					
G					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1.676	2	.838	3.737	.025
Within Groups	48.669	217	.224		
Total	50.345	219			

In the Anova table, F-value is used as a test of significance of differences in mean across the groups. It is the ratio between-groups mean square and within-groups mean square, which is 3.737 and its associated p-value (sig.) is 0.025 which is less than 0.05. This shows that there is a statistical significant difference between the mean of two groups of gender.
From all the above interpretations, we reject the hypothesis that - Stress level is same across male and female students. And we conclude that different gender groups have different stress levels.

Hypothesis No.1 is rejected.

Hypothesis No.2:
There is a significant association between gender of student and perceived stress level.
The above mentioned hypothesis is tested using Crosstabs in SPSS 24.0 version. The outputs are as under:
The first table is the Case Processing summary, which tells us the number of valid cases used for analysis. Only cases with non-missing values for both gender and stress levelcan be used in the test.

Table No. 1.3 – Case Processing Summary for Gender (G)& Stress Level (SL)

	Case Processing Summary					
	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
G * SL	220	100.0%	0	0.0%	220	100.0%

The next tables are the cross-tabulation and chi-square test results -

Table No. 1.4 – G*SL Cross-tabulation

G * SL Crosstabulation					
Count					
		SL			Total
		Low	Moderate	High	
G	1	16	121	5	142
	2	13	56	9	78
Total		29	177	14	220

Table No. 1.5 – Chi-Square Tests for G & SL

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	7.325[a]	2	.026
Likelihood Ratio	7.018	2	.030
Linear-by-Linear Association	.180	1	.671
N of Valid Cases	220		
a. 1 cells (16.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 4.96.			

Since the p-value is less than our chosen significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$), we accept the null hypothesis. Rather, we conclude that there is enough evidence to suggest an association between gender and stress level.
Based on the results, we can state the following:
There is an association between gender and stress level of students ($X^2(2)> = 7.325$, $p = 0.026$).

Hypothesis 2 is accepted.

CONCLUSIONS:
The researcher would like to conclude that the perceived stress of management students is substantially moderate and needs to be managed properly to lower the level. Stress level across male and female students is not the same. Moreover, there is a significant association between gender of student and perceived stress level. It is important for students to recognize the stress levels at early stage and manage it so that it does not impact their academic performance.

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