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A Study of Learning Stress and Stress Management Strategies of the Students of Postgraduate level: A Case Study of Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Pakistan

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Abstract

Stress managementThis study was designed to study Learning Stress and Stress Management Strategies for University Students. The objectives of the study were to find out the common symptoms of stress, causes of stress and to suggest stress management strategies used by students for coping with stress. For collecting data, survey method was adopted. This study was completed by following the procedure of descriptive method of research. 39 questions were used for data collection. 200 students from different departments of The Islamia University of Bahawalpur were chosen as a sample of the study. This study concluded that majority of students felt fatigue during stress. Burden of study, assignments were major causes of stress and they agreed that they reduce stress by watching T.V/Movies, listen to music or take part in other leisure time activities. It was recommended that burden of study may be reduced by conducting co curricular activities in academic area.

Key words: Stress, pressure, tension, abnormality in behavior, acadamic pressure, anti social behaviors, violence, stress and productivity

1. Introduction

Stress is a part of day-to-day living. In our daily lives, we are often exposed to situations that produce stress. The interpretation and reaction to events that make stress are different for different people. For example, speaking in public can be stressful for some people and relaxing for others. However if our stress level is too high, it can result in serious medical and social problems. Any event or circumstance that strains or exceeds an individual ability to cope is called stress (Lahey, 2004, P.500).

The term “stress” can be defined in many ways. Generally, A layperson may define stress in terms of pressure, tension, unpleasant external forces or an emotional response (Ogden, 2004, P.234). In fact, layman definition of stress and the range of stress are very confusing and very multidimensional. Stress is an abnormality in behavior, psychology, emotional out burst, restraint in performing day-to-day routine work or physiological changes in human being.

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Stress is a complex concept. It can be routine stress at home, at school, and at work might be fairly begun individually, but collectively they could create great strain. Different things cause stress in different people. It is also a part of every student daily life. From the very start till the university life, different styles of education and its diverse demands cause stress. A student's life is subjected to different kinds of stressors, such as the pressure of academics with an obligation of success, uncertain future and difficulties envisaged for integration in to the system. These students face, social, emotional and physical and family problems which may affect their learning ability and academic performance (Fish & Nies, 1996; Chewgrahan, Rogers & Yassin, 2003).

Stress prevents university students from focusing and enjoying learning from behaving harmoniously, and from unfolding their unique talents. Accumulate stress causes frustration; depression and anxiety, and can lead to attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, substance abuse, antisocial behaviors and even violence. Stress has become an important topic in academic circle as well as in our society. Now it has become common among the university student and it can be controlled by stress management strategies because stress in academic institution can have both positive and negative consequences if not well managed. Stress management is the ability to maintain and control when situation, people and events make excessive demands. Stress in university students can be traced by adopting different strategies. We must check and monitor the abnormal or unusual behavior of the university students. So that suitable measures should be taken to eradicate the deficiency level of the students. This research evaluates all these factors, signs of stress and also suggests suitable strategies to solve the problems.

Personality variables also affect people's reactions to potential stressors. Some people are simply not bothered by situations that other perceives to be stressful (Glavin et al, 1991). Stress occurs in academic areas due to different reasons. Researchers have identified a number of stressors in academic institution such as many assignments, competition with other students, failures, lack of pocket money (Fairbrother & Warn, 2003), poor relationship with other students or teachers, family or problems at home. Institutional (University) level stressors are overcrowded lecture halls, (Omgori, 2007; Awino & Agolla, 2008), semester system, and inadequate resources to perform academic work (Erkutlu & Chafra 2000).

It is important to remember that regardless of the source, most of the stress that students experience can be viewed as serving positive ends. Stress is not always the same as distress. Stress can be experienced in positive events as much as the negative. Stress that the students' feel as they start exams that they have prepared for is much different than the stress felt by students who haven't taken their time to study. If balanced correctly, stress can be a positive element in our lives. "Increased stress increases productivity up to a point, after which things rapidly deteriorate," said Paul J. Rosch, M.D. (2007), and President of the American Institute of Stress. Using stress constructively depends on understanding where that line is between stress as performance enhancer and stress as stumbling block.

While stress is often talked about in negative terms, a healthy or moderate level of stress motivates one to talk action, develop new skills, and achieve performance and fulfill one's potential. Stress is not just part of university, it is part of life; learning how to anticipate, recognize, and successfully manage stress is an important life skill, while unmanaged stress can lead to emotional, physical, and interpersonal problems.

1.1 Statement of Problem

In 21st century stress is considered as the cancer of the mind which does not allow the student to think about his study and responsibilities. Students face many physical as well as psychological problems during study hours due to learning stress. In educational institutions it is necessary for students to understand the learning stress and stress management strategies therefore the present research in focusing on "A Study of Learning Stress and Stress Management Strategies of the Student of the Islamia University Bahawalpur".

1.2 Objectives of the Study

Following were the objectives of this study.

1. To find the common symptoms of stress in university students.
2. To find out the causes of stress in university students.
3. To find out the stress management technique used by students.
4. To recommend strategies to cope the stress .

1.3 *Research Methodology*

This study was descriptive in nature and survey method was used. The following procedure was adopted for the study.

1.4 *Population*

Population of the study was all male and female students of The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Pakistan.

1.5 *Sample*

200 University students were selected as the sample of this study. Division is as follows.

- Faculty of Education-50 Students
- Faculty of Islamic Learning-50 Students
- Faculty of Science-50 Students
- Faculty of Arts-50 Students

1.6 *Development of Research Tool*

Descriptive research was carried out on the basis of information and measurement of data. For this study questionnaire was used. Questionnaire was designed on five point Likert scale. It was kept in view that each statement must express a definite idea. All the statements of the questionnaire were closed ended except last two. Each close-ended statement provided description of five levels, mainly strongly agree, agree, uncertain, disagree and strongly disagree.

In the present study the questionnaire was selected for collection data due to the following reasons.

- i. The population of this study was educated and could read and write.
- ii. It was a valid way to collect lot of information from a large sample in a written form.
- iii. It was considered as a convenient method to get responses.

1.7 *Analysis of the Data*

After collecting all the data from female and male students of Islamia University Bahawalpur, Pakistan through research tool, the total number of responses for each item was calculated. The percentage of responses on each item as well as the mean scores was calculated. The items, which received the highest value on percentage scale, were interpreted as findings in the light of objectives of study. The generalizations of findings are rise to conclusions. In the light of conclusion recommendations were made.

1.8 *Findings*

1. Significant majority of the respondents (82%) agreed that they feel fatigue/tired under stress
2. Majority of the respondents (68%) agreed that they feel muscle/pain
3. Majority of the respondents (62%) agreed that they feel difficulty to concentrate under stress
4. Majority of the respondents (75.5%) agreed that they feel difficulty to remember thing when under stress.
5. Slight majority of the respondents (59%) agreed that they feel dryness of mouth and throat when stressed.
6. Slight majority of the respondents (52%) agreed that they feel irritable and anxious when stressed.
7. (51%) respondents agreed that they feel anxiety without knowing when stressed.

8. Majority of the respondents (60.5%) agreed that they feel restless when stressed.
 9. (50%) respondents disagreed that they feel diarrhea, indignation, upset stomach, vomiting.
 10. Slight majority of the respondents (57.5%) agreed that they often feel headache when under stress.
 11. Slight majority of the respondents (54.5%) agreed that they often feel get angry quickly when stressed.
 12. Slight majority of the respondents (57%) disagreed that they often feel they dream when stressed.
 13. (42.5%) respondents disagreed that they often feel loss of appetite/eat more then used when under stress and(24.5) were uncertain about the statement
 14. Slight majority of the respondents (55.5%) said that university environment create stress.
 15. Slight majority of the respondents (59%) agreed that different educational setup increases stress level among university students.
 16. Slight majority of the respondents (54%) agreed that competitive environment create stress.
 17. Majority of the respondents (75%) agreed that burden of study increase stress level among university students.
 18. Majority of the respondents (73%) agree that exam create stress.
 19. Majority respondents (66.5%) agreed that assignments increase stress level among university students .
 20. Slight majority of the respondents (59.5%) agreed that stress arises due to poor time management.
 21. Slight majority of the respondents (58.5%) agreed that lack of origination skills create stress.
 22. Slight majority of the respondents (57.5%) agreed that lack of facilities for study researches create stress.
 23. Majority of the respondents (74.5%) agreed that difficulty to understand the teacher create stress in students.
 24. Slight majority of the respondents (57.5%) agreed that teacher-student relationship create stress.
 25. Slight majority of the respondents (57%) agreed that presentations create stress in students.
 26. Majority of the respondents (65%) agreed that they remove attention to humor laugh when stressed.
 27. Majority of the respondents (63.5%) agreed that they accept the things and facts that they cannot change when they stressed.
 28. Majority of the respondents (63.5%) agreed that stress can be controlled with proper time management.
 29. Majority of the respondents (60%) agreed that they reduce stress by properly hydrate body/ drinking water.
 30. Slight majority of the respondents (53%) agreed that they take balance diet to reduce stress.
 31. Slight majority of the respondents (57%) agreed that they talk to themselves in stress.
 32. Majority of the respondents (77%) agreed that they get support of friends & family when in stress.
 33. (50%) respondents disagreed that they go for exercise when stressed.
 34. Slight majority of the respondents (57%) agreed that they reduce stress by getting an adequate amount of sleep.
 35. Slight majority of the respondents (55%) agreed that they take a break from work when stressed.
 36. Majority of the respondent (64%) agreed that watching TV/movies could reduce stress, listen to music or take part in other leisure time activity/hobby.
 37. Majority of the respondents (65%) agreed that they take deep breath and relax to reduce stress.
- Result related to the two open-ended questions states in the questionnaires are: -
38. Causes of stress (32%) respondents feel stress due to lack of facilities to study. (41%) respondents feel stress due to burden of study and research work in semester system.
 39. Strategies to cope with stress (68%) respondents release their stress by remaining busy in various activities of interest.

1.9 Conclusions

1. Majority of the university students agreed that they feel fatigue, muscle tension, also difficulty to concentrate and remember things during stress.
2. Majority of the university students agreed that they feel dryness of mouth, irritable, anxiety without knowing and restless during stress.
3. Majority of the university student's disagreed that they feel upset stomach when stressed.
4. Majority of the university students agreed that they feel headache and get angry quickly when stressed.
5. Majority of the university students disagreed that they loss of appetite/eat more then used during stressed.

6. Majority of the university students agreed that the university environment, different educational setup, competitive environment, burden of study were the major causes of stress.
7. Majority of the university students agreed that assignments were major causes of learning stress.
8. Majority of the university students agreed that exams and poor time management were causes of stress.
9. Majority of the university students agreed that lack of organizational skills; facilities for study and difficulty to understand the teachers were major causes of stress.
10. Majority of the university students agreed that they remove tension by humour, accept the things and facts that can't change and with proper time management.
11. Majority of the university students agreed that they take balanced diet, and get support of friend/family and regular exercise for reducing stress.
12. Majority of the university students strongly agreed that they remove stress by watching T.V or take part in other leisure time activity/hobby.

1.10 Recommendations

1. Teachers may identify the symptoms of stress in students and provide counselling services to help them cope with it.
2. Departmental committee may be formed which should educate the students about how to identify and manage stress.
3. University may promote a positive learning environment and provide study and research facilities so that the conditions of the stress may be minimized during study session.
4. Stress of study may be decrease at university level on students by co-curricular activities.
5. University students may be guided regarding proper time management.
6. Student guidance and counselling canter at university level may be set up to help reducing students learning stress.
7. Learning Stress among university students may be reduce by utilization of good study skills, which basically involves remaining calm, focused and organized.
8. Teacher may guide the students for completion assignments.

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