**A COMPARITIVE ANALYSIS OF ACADEMIC STRESS BETWEEN STUDENTS OF LIBERAL ARTS, ARCHITECTURE AND ENGINEERING AT P P SAVANI UNIVERSITY**

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**Abstract:**

This research paper explores the phenomenon of academic stress among students of liberal arts, engineering, and architecture within a university. The study aims to understand and compare the levels of academic stress faced by students in these disciplines. The research design follows a simple approach, and data is collected using a 36-item self-report questionnaire (Rajendran & Kaliappan,1991. The sample consists of 60 students, and the data is analysed descriptively.

The results indicate that liberal arts students experience the highest level of academic stress, possibly due to their heavy theoretical workload and strict attendance criteria. Architecture students also face significant stress, which may be attributed to the demanding nature of their practical and cognitive work. Engineering students have comparatively lower stress levels, which may be due to their structured curriculum and limited cognitive load.

The study emphasizes the need for stress management techniques and interventions tailored to the specific challenges faced by students in different disciplines. Understanding and addressing academic stress can enhance students' overall well-being and contribute to a more positive learning environment. The findings can be beneficial for educational institutions in developing effective support systems for students to cope with academic stress and improve their mental health.

 **Keywords**

Academic stress, Test Anxiety, Stress, Collage Pressures, Stress Management

**INTRODUCTION**

We now use the word "stress" more frequently in our everyday speech. Despite the fact that stress is a topic we all discuss frequently, what exactly it entails is frequently unclear. We are well aware of a few words that are used to describe stress. These words include pressure, depression, burnout, stress, and strain. Many people believe that stress is something negative or positive that happens to them. Others believe that stress is the result of what an incident does to our bodies, minds, and behaviours. When something bad happens to us, we automatically begin mentally analysing the circumstances. If the situation is dangerous to us, we try to decide how to handle it and what tools and techniques we can employ. We classify the conditions as "stressful" and must respond to them using the traditional "stress response" if we determine that the demands of the scenario outweigh the talents we possess. We don't perceive a situation as "stressful" if we believe that our coping mechanisms will win over its demands. While some life circumstances can be stressful, how we perceive those circumstances ultimately determines whether or not they pose a problem for us. The impact of a stressful situation depends on how we view it, perceive it, and respond to it. We can learn to manage stress more successfully when we are aware of who we are and how we react in stressful situations. According to one definition, stress is the body's response to stresses; as a result, the intricate interactions between the body's systems can have harmful effects on its functions and organs, causing a person to become "stressed out," which can lead to significant sickness. This course satisfies Hans Selye's definition of stress as the body's general reaction to demands. According to Hans Selye (1978/1956), the demands might be either positive (Eustress) or negative (Distress). The physiological and neurological responses to stress make up the internal stress component. Hans Selye (1985) focused on the internal characteristics of stress and described stress as "nonspecific" since it can be caused by a wide range of various stressors. The Bio-Psychosocial Model of Stress (Bernard & Krupat, 1994) is one of the most complete models of stress. The Bio Psychosocial Model of Stress states that stress has three elements: an external element, an internal element, and the interplay of the external and internal elements. (1994, Bernard) Stress is a state of tension that people go through when they are faced with unusual demands, restrictions, or opportunities. Stress is a term used to describe the emotional imbalances that can result from the constraints of modern life and work expectations.

Stress is not always unpleasant, though. The absence of stress makes life boring, monotonous, and spiritless since stress is the life's flavour. Although there is no single, accepted definition of stress, the following three definitional categories are frequently used: One of these is a stimulus, an external event, typically a threat, that has a complicated impact on the body; in this understanding, stress is referred to as a "stressor," one that causes complex responses in the body's numerous systems. Stress is a state of tension that people go through when they are faced with unusual demands, restrictions, or opportunities. Stress is a term used to describe the emotional imbalances that can result from the constraints of modern life and work expectations. Stress is not always unpleasant, though. The absence of stress makes life boring, monotonous, and spiritless since stress is the life's flavour. Although there is no single, accepted definition of stress, the following three definitional categories are frequently used: One of these is a stimulus, an outside event—typically a danger—that has an impact on the body in complex ways; in this understanding, stress is referred to as a "stressor," one that causes intricate responses from the body's numerous systems.

**Academic stress**

For the longest time, people believed that students were the least likely to have stress or other issues. According to Masih and Gulrez (2006), stress has evolved into a lifestyle issue that can affect everyone, regardless of stage of development (Banerjee & Chatterjee, 2016). Studying was the sole task that was expected of students, and it was never thought of as stressful. Expectations that parents had for their kids turned out to be stressful because they grew into heavier loads that these kids were unable to bear. One student commits suicide every hour, according to figures from the National Crime Records Bureau (Saha, 2017). According to the statistics, 1.8% of students killed themselves after failing a test, and suicide rates increased by 80% in a year. India has the highest suicide rate in the world for those in the 15-to-29 age group, according to a 2012 Lancet analysis (as stated in "India Has the Highest Suicide Rate", n.d.), and these figures don't seem to be going down. These concerning numbers have been linked primarily to academic stress. According to Lee & Larson (2000), this stress is the result of a relationship between environmental stressors, student assessments, and their responses to those assessments. It has now established itself as a serious reality that is a "career stopper" (Kadapatti & Vijayalaxmi, 2012). As a result, it becomes a big reason for worry because it is an indicator of the growing problems with mental health in India (Nadamuri & Ch, 2011). It is crucial to recognise that less stress does not automatically translate into improved performance from students; rather, in these circumstances, they could view the assignment as uninteresting and get easily bored (Uchil, 2017).Although some degrees of stress encourage students to perform at their best, when that stress is not well managed owing to a lack of resources, it can have negative effects on both the student and the institution. No matter what the cause is, every person experiences the same stress response. For instance, the body would react the same way to stress from a marriage, exam worry, work stress, etc. This is mostly caused by the sympathetic dissociation of our nervous system and the adrenocortical axis, which results in the "fight or flight" response (Bourne & Yaroush, 2003). Heart rate (HR), blood pressure (BP), respiratory rate, increased blood flow towards skeletal muscles, etc. and other physiological changes that can be seen in the body.

The educational system also facilitates, which causes kids to suffer higher levels of stress. Agrawal & Chahar (2007), Sreeramareddy et al. (2007), the size of the syllabus (Agrawal & Chahar, 2007), the semester grading system, the lack of resources and facilities, the long hours, and the demands of rote learning are a few of the sources (Deb et al., 2015). Parents and institutions repeatedly instill a fear of failure in their children, which lowers their confidence and self-esteem. Increased expectations were listed as one of the reasons contributing to higher stress levels by Ang & Huan (2006). Thus, given that different stressors can lead to different stress reactions in the body, it is important to understand the causes of stress in order to create interventions that are specifically aimed at lowering students' stress levels. This will assist to promote an individual's overall well-being. Although many people view college as a great experience, many students also view it as chronically stressful because of the academic demands it places on them, such as tests, papers, and presentations (Murphy & Archer, 1996). Stress in childhood is becoming more common and more severe. The strain on children to mature emotionally and psychologically at younger and younger ages, the decline in the number of loving parents, and the resulting decline in parental love and support are some variables that may contribute to this stress. Adolescence is the stage where a youngster goes through a psychological transformation as they become older and enter puberty. A growing individual passes through this developmental stage as they transition from childhood to maturity. Irvine (2002) lists a variety of stressors for kids, including parental divorce and separation, failure in school, and social rejection. Stressful situations are also thought to get worse as adolescence progresses since teenagers frequently deal with stressors like peer pressure, home problems, and academic worries. Teenage years can be thought of as a confusing time. The people throughout this time are no longer seen as children but are still regarded as being too immature to be recognised as adults. Both the shift from adolescent to childhood and the reverse, from childhood to adolescence, have been seen as developmental transitions. Biological, social, and psychological shifts tend to increase a person's vulnerability.

According to the definition of a transition, it is the change from "one state of certainty to another with a period of uncertainty in between." For many children, moving from elementary to secondary school is a stressful experience. More than at any other point in life, schools are noticeably bigger, academic demands are higher, school circles and peer pressures alter more drastically. Adolescence is frequently characterised as a time of increased egocentrism, turbulence, and risk-taking behaviour experimentation. Adolescents' close emotional links to their parents are put to the test as they start to assert their independence and individuality. The choice of courses is made at the senior secondary level in the Indian context. According to these courses, the student's future develops. Teenagers begin to experience academic pressure at this stage because it immediately affects their employment possibilities. The level of stress was the same for both genders. Boys were more likely to express concern over events unrelated to interpersonal issues, such as subpar academic performance, becoming sick, relocating to a new place, and other occurrences. The majority of girls' stress came from their relationships, including conflicts with their siblings, peers, or friends. According to Aldwin & Greenberger (1987), the most frequent cause of stress among students is academic issues. According to Schafer (1996), the most annoying daily annoyances were typically pressures associated to education, such as the constant pressure to study, a lack of free time, having to write term papers and take tests, future plans, and dull teachers. According to Struthers et al. (2000), poorer course grades were correlated with high levels of academic stress. Exams, assignments, deadline pressure, grade pressure, and uncertainty all contribute to the high degree of academic stress that students endure. In conclusion, this stress has a negative impact on their ability to learn. Children who are under stress sometimes lack interest in things that they might otherwise find fun and exhibit violent behaviour, social phobia, shyness, and emotional disorders. Individual assessments and interpretations often determine how people react to stressful events, but some are fundamentally more stressful than others.

Students feel tension, trepidation, and worry when they perceive challenging situations as harmful or frightening. The activation of the autonomic nervous system also causes a variety of physiological and behavioural changes in them. According to Panchanath and Shanmugaganiesan (1992), the degree of the perceived danger or threat directly correlates with the intensity of the reaction. The nature and severity of the stress stimuli, the person's prior experiences, the presence and level of social support in the surroundings, and a host of other factors all play a role in the behavioural changes brought on by stress. When under experimentally generated stress, people have a tendency to seek out other people who are also under stress; they are less inclined to seek out others who are not under stress (Yets, 1936). Chronic stress and deprivation can cause students to develop a condition of withdrawal and social apathy that can be challenging to change after the stress is gone. According to Dixon, Wayne, Heppner, Paul, Anderson, and Wayne (1991), academic stress has also been linked to schizophrenia, depression, suicide, and a host of other maladaptive behaviours like delinquency and crime.

**REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

According to Reddy et al. (2018), there are differences in stress among the streams. Stress management is crucial on a personal, social, and institutional level. It has been discovered that stress management techniques like feedback, yoga, life skills training, mindfulness, meditation, and psychotherapy are effective. The key to managing stress is to pinpoint its primary cause. Professionals can create customised stress management plans. The holistic wellbeing of the students is crucial for both them as individuals and the institution. In his study, Dimitrov (2017) asserted that stress can be reduced by ensuring that students place the highest priority on their welfare. Some of the areas to concentrate on are food, exercise, work, and leisure. Additionally, he came to the conclusion that the educational system places too much emphasis on academic achievement and not enough on kids' overall development.

As the emphasis is only on the academics and not the mental growth of a go-getter, students are typically conditioned in a way that makes them scared to take on impending problems. The selection of educational media is limited. The fact that English is the sole language offered may be a barrier for students from rural backgrounds. Employability-focused courses are not commonly offered. For better jobs, recent grads need to strengthen their communication skills more. In their study, Sharma et al. (2016) noted the adoption of a number of techniques to reduce stress. One physical activity performed each day can help with the stress issue. Additionally, one might start using different time management strategies and engage in extracurricular activities that are advantageous for students. Additionally, it was advised that institutions should have a relaxing atmosphere to reduce stress. The teaching method can be given new life by altering the teacher's delivery style and offering mentors.

The relationship between student mental health and academic stress was identified by Subramani and Kadhiravan (2017). He agreed that students are constrained by the academic system and that there is a link between academic stress and mental health. In addition, there is not enough assistance from parents and schools in terms of guidance, which demoralises pupils by placing excessive pressure on them to achieve higher grades. When students contribute positively to the academic forums, they are in good mental health. They also suggested that because private school students receive more homework and other academic-related responsibilities than children at government schools, they are under more pressure. There was a noticeable disparity between the mental health of children in private and public schools. In contrast to government school kids, who come from a low socioeconomic background and receive little exposure, he claimed that students from private schools receive different nurturing and exposure. This is one of the factors contributing to the rise in stress.

Kaur (2014) acknowledged that the academic Stress affects adolescent mental health. Compared to boys, girls who are under academic pressure have poorer mental health. According to the survey, parents frequently put pressure and stress on their children. The result is a decrease in mental health. Prabu (2015) conducted research on students in higher education and suggested that male students experience higher levels of stress than female students. Academic stress is higher for urban students than for rural ones. The stress levels of students in public schools are lower than those in private schools. Students in the Science stream are under more pressure than those in the Arts stream.

In his study, Bataineh (2013) evaluated the academic pressures that university students experience. The findings of the analysis show that academic overload is unacceptable, that there is not enough time for study because the subject matter is so broad, and that the family has high expectations. Stress and a lack of motivation are a few of the factors. The main factor contributing to stress is fear of failure. The students of the various Specialisations were not significantly different from one another. Deb et al. (2014) conducted study on 400 male students in the 10th and 12th grades at five high schools in Kolkata. 35 percent of pupils have advanced degrees. Stress and high levels of anxiety were shown by 37%. It is believed that pupils with lower qualifications are more stressed than those with higher qualifications. It has been observed that pupils who participate in extracurricular activities are less stressed than those students who don't.

**METHODOLOGY**

***Objective***

1. To understand the academic stress faced by students of liberal arts, engineering and architecture.

2. To compare the level of academic stress faced by students of liberal arts, engineering and architecture.

*Hypothesis*

*H0 (Null hypothesis)*

1. There will not be any academic stress faced by students of liberal arts, engineering and architecture.

2. There will not be any statically significant difference between the scores of different schools within the university.

H1 (Alternate hypothesis)

1. There will be academic stress faced by students of liberal arts, engineering and architecture.

2. There will be statically significant difference between the scores of different schools within

the university.

***Design***

The study follows a simple research design. The primary aim of the research is to understand the different levels of academic stress of different schools.

***Sample***

The sample consisted of 60 students both male and female between the range of 18-22 years which were randomly selected for the study.

1. 20 students of Liberal arts
2. 20 students of Architecture
3. 20 students of Engineering

***Tools used***

Academic stress questionnaire by Mohammad Akram, Mohd. Ilyas Khan and Sabiha Baby (Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh )

This is a 36-item self-report questionnaire with 4-point Likert scale, no stress at all, slight stress, a lot of stress and extreme stress. It measures

 1. Inadequate academic environment in the college (item no. 1,5,12, 21,30,34,43,51,57)

2. Lack of adjustment (item no. 9,11,14,16,24,26,39,52)

3. Apprehensive about future (item no. 2,15,18,19,22,28,46)

4. Poor administration (item no. 3,4,7,10,17,29)

5. Worries (item no. 25,37,41,49,50)

***Procedure:***

The google sheet pertaining the relevant details was made in order to save paper. The students from different departments were contacted to fill in the details after they gave consent for it. The data was thoroughly mined and analysed. For the purpose of analysis, graphical method was also used.

***Statistical analysis:***

Descriptive analysis was computed on the obtained data. After the normality was checked, statistical mean was calculated using Microsoft excel.

**RESULT AND INTERPRETATION**

The result of the data sheet was analysed and descriptive analysis was computed on the data. Graphical representation of the data is as shown below

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **School**  | **Total**  | **Mean**  |
| SLM  | 1,286  | 64.3  |
| SOA  | 1,196  | 59.8  |
| SOE  | 1,004  | 50.2  |



 **Fig.1. Pie chart showing comparative analysis**

The result obtained showed that the total of 20 liberal arts students was 1,286 as compared to 1,004 of Engineering students and 1,196 of Architecture students. The mean obtained from liberal arts students is 64.3, of engineering is 50.2 and of architecture is 59.8.

The result demonstrated that liberal arts have highest mean which is 64.3 which may be because of more theories, tough syllabus, assignments pressure and strict attendance criteria. The students of architecture have the second highest score which is 59.8 which shows that they have high academic stress. It may be due to more practical and cognitive processing. Architecture is a tedious field to study, because of the constant pressure towards excellence, the inter-student competition and one up-man ship, the exhaustion from daily creative output and the very wide breadth of information, processes, and data which Architects must learn. Furthermore, engineering students have the lowest score which is 50.2 which is possibly due to structured curriculum, fixed amount of cognitive load that they have (only remember specific theories), less exploration into further information.

**Future Prospects of the Research:**

***Longitudinal Studies:*** To gain a deeper understanding of academic stress among students of different disciplines, future research can be conducted using longitudinal studies. Tracking the same cohort of students over an extended period will provide insights into the changes in stress levels throughout their academic journey.

***Qualitative Research:*** While the current study focused on quantitative data, future research can incorporate qualitative methods, such as interviews and focus groups, to explore students' perceptions and experiences of academic stress in more depth

***Comparative Studies***: Expanding the scope of the research to include more diverse universities and educational systems can offer comparative insights into the factors influencing academic stress across different cultural and social contexts.

***Interventions and Support Programs:*** Building on the findings of this research, future studies can design and implement targeted interventions and support programs to help students cope with academic problem (Vajpayee, 2017a; Vajpayee, 2017b; Joshi, Vajpayee and Mishra, 2005). Evaluating the effectiveness of such interventions can contribute to evidence-based practices for helping students with various academic and non-academic issues (Vajpayee and Mishra, 2003, Mishra and Vajpayee, 2002).

***Gender and Cultural Differences:*** Investigating the role of gender and cultural factors in academic stress can be an essential area of research. Understanding how stress manifests differently in various genders and cultural backgrounds can lead to more tailored support for students. As changing of culture and acculturations also affects the mental health negatively (Mishra and Vajpayee, 1996).

***Teacher and Institutional Role:*** Exploring the role of teachers and institutions in contributing to or alleviating academic stress can provide valuable insights into the educational environment's impact (Sheokand and Vajpayee, 2023). It is duty of organization to readdress these issues (Sheokand, 2023).

***Mental Health Impact:*** Future research can delve deeper into the mental health impact of academic stress, including its association with depression, anxiety, and other psychological conditions. Understanding these relationships can guide mental health interventions for students (Vajpayee, 2017a; Vajpayee, 2017b; Vajpayee, 2019).

***Coping Mechanisms:*** Investigating the effectiveness of different coping mechanisms employed by students to manage academic stress can help identify best practices and develop targeted stress management training programs with yoga and mindfulness practices (Vajpayee and Sanghani, 2022).

***Technology and Academic Stress:*** With the increasing use of technology in education, studying the relationship between technology use and academic stress can provide insights into how digital tools can either contribute to or alleviate stress among students (Devanani et al, 2022; Vajpayee, Devanani and Sanghani, 2022).

In conclusion, further research in these areas can significantly contribute to our understanding of academic stress among students and lead to the development of evidence-based interventions and support systems that promote students' well-being and academic success.

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