

IMPACT OF ACADEMIC STRESS AMONG THE MANAGEMENT STUDENTS OF AMET UNIVERSITY – AN ANALYSIS

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Abstract

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.

Keywords: Academic Stress, Eustress, Coping mechanisms

Introduction

The education sector in India is evolving, led by the emergence of new niche sectors like vocational training, finishing schools, sector – specific programmes and e-learning. The Indian education system, considered as one of the largest in the world, is divided into two major segments of core and non-core education. While schools and higher education constitute the core group, the non-core business consists of pre-schools, vocational training and coaching classes. India has emerged as a strong potential market for investments in training and education sector, due to its favorable demographics (young population) and being a services-driven economy. In today's MBA Shipping and Logistics is one of the most popular choices of the youth.

AMET University, formerly the Academy of Maritime Education and Training (AMET), is an educational institution in India dedicated for maritime education and training which offers the unique sector-specific management education programme, which is the first of its kind in Asia, through its AMET Business School. The MBA programme is designed to equip students with adequate skills and knowledge in general management, functional specialization in the areas of Marketing, Finance, Human Resources & Information

Technology and with sectoral specialization in shipping and logistics management.

Stress Faced By Management Students

Management education is an important medium that facilitates improvement of leadership qualities and turns out excellent future managers. Students entering into the professional education need to face many challenges to which they have never been exposed earlier. The pressure to earn good grades and to earn a degree is very high (Hirsch & Ellis, 1996)^[8]. Other potential sources of stress include excessive homework, unclear assignments, and uncomfortable classrooms (Kohn & Frazer, 1986)^[4]. In addition to academic requirements, relations with faculty members and time pressures may also be sources of stress (Sgan-Cohen & Lowental, 1988)^[7]. It is important 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.

Objectives

- To find out the components of academic stress experienced by management students.

- To examine the relationship between stress and academic performance.
- To identify the impact of academic stress among the MBA students.
- To identify stress management techniques that would be useful for management students of AMET University.

Components of Academic Stress In Management Studies

According to Purna Prabhakar Nandamuri and Gowthami (2012)^[3], stress in academic institutions can have both positive and negative consequences if not well managed. Academic institutions have different work settings compared to non-academic and therefore one would expect the difference in symptoms, causes, and consequences of stress in the two set up. Stress seems to be very common in college students` life. They have to survive academically and to prepare themselves for further career. Not surprisingly, much of the academic stress at graduate level is related to what students learn and how they learn it. There's a lot of pressure for the present generation management students to learn more and more than the past generations. Just as it can be stressful to handle a heavy and challenging workload, some students can experience stress from regular academic work that isn't difficult enough. For the purpose of the present study, the components of academic activity are identified as – curriculum and instruction; team work; assessment and placement. The present study attempts to find out which of these aspects are creating stress among management students.

However, overstress causes problems that can have serious effects on people. Being a student can be the most interesting time of one's life. New friends, new places, new challenges can make a student life stressful. Stress management encompasses techniques to equip a person with effective coping mechanisms for dealing with physiological

stress. Students have different expectations, goals, and values that they want to fulfill, which is possible only if the students expectations, goals, and values are integrated with that of the institution (Goodman, 1993)^[5]. Stress management Techniques include self-management, conflict resolution, positive attitude, self-talk, breathing, meditation, exercise, diet and rest. Effective stress management also involves learning to set limits for the issues that create stress.

Factors affecting stress: Environmental stressors

- Peers treating freshers unlike the way treat each other
- Faculty treating different peer groups differently
- Need to mingle with peers of different race/ethnicity on campus
- Finding support groups sensitive to specific needs
- Living in the local community
- Adjusting to the campus environment
- Participating in class
- Meeting with faculty

Academic stressors

- Handling the academic workload
- Meeting deadlines for course assignments
- Fear of failing to meet program expectations
- Fulfilling responsibilities at home and school
- Taking exams
- Handling relationships
- Writing papers

Monetary Stressors

- Family having money problems
- Paying monthly expenses
- Arranging childcare
- Being obligated to participate in family functions
- Being obligated to repay loan

Physical Stressors

- Sleep disorder
- Poor diet
- Drug misuse
- Alcohol misuse
- Excess heat
- Excess caffeine
- Excess cold
- Illness
- Smoking
- Lack of relaxation
- Surgery
- Chronic fatigue

- Peer pressure
- Excess anger
- Unrealistic beliefs
- Health worries
- Unrealistic expectations
- Excessive worrying
- Unhappy childhood
- Unemployment
- Perfectionism
- Loneliness
- Low self esteem
- People pleasing
- Boredom
- Negative self-talk
- Personality
- Right thinking style
- Excessive self-criticism
- Exam pressure

Psychological Stressors

A Conceptual model of Stress is presented in Fig :1

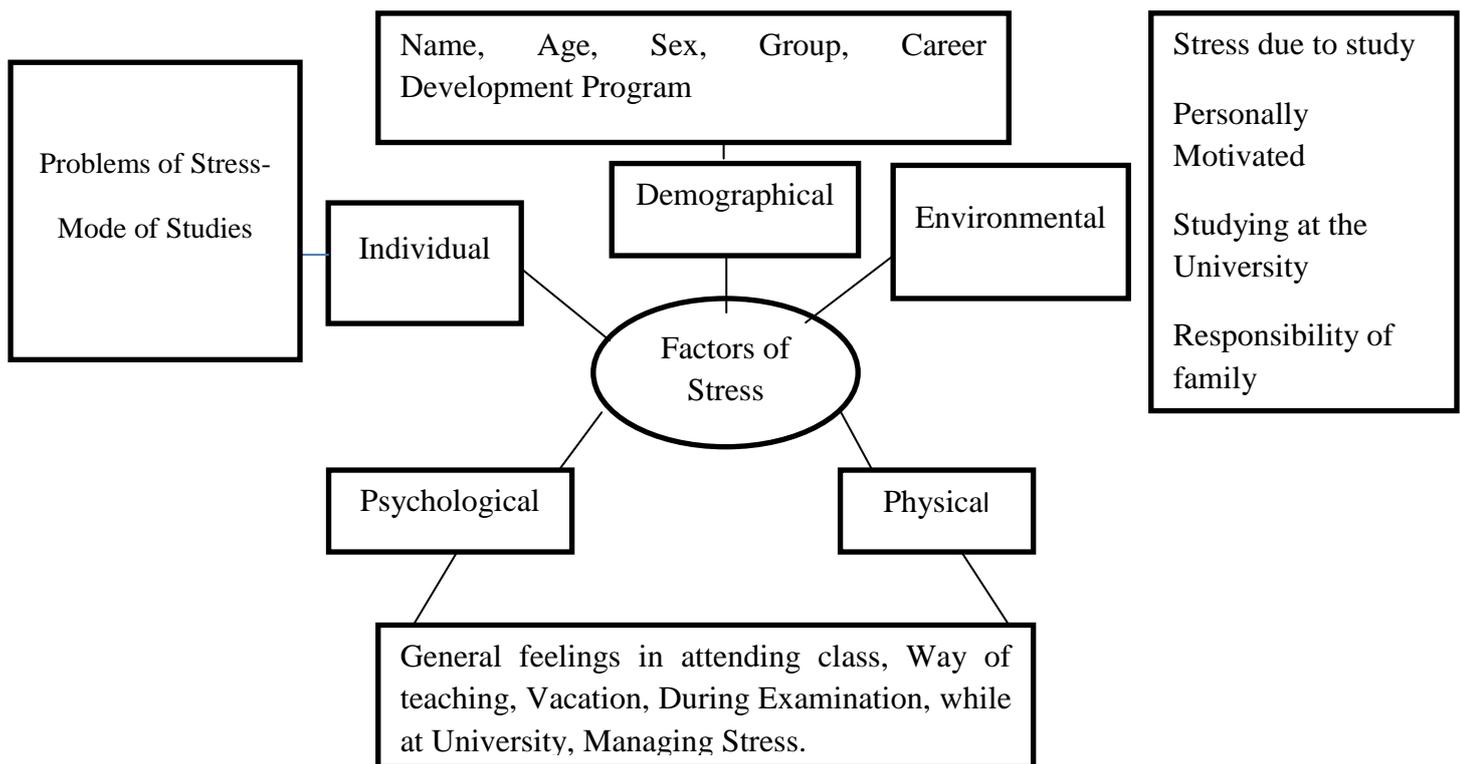


Fig 1: Conceptual Framework.
Source: Author's Field Work.

Causes of Student Stress

Feeling stressed is a normal reaction to a situation which feels out of control or overwhelming. Any problem can cause stress but students do face particular worries which are based on pressure. Some of the main reasons blamed for student stress are: burden of course work, debt, Exam pressure, financial worries and relationship problems.

University students, especially freshmen, are a group particularly prone to stress (D'Zurilla and Sheedy, 1991)^[10] due to the transitional nature of university life. They must adjust to being away from home probably for the first time, maintain a high level of academic achievement, and adjust to a new social setting. University students, regardless of year in school, often face pressures related to doing well in studies another finding a job. These stressors do not cause anxiety or tension by themselves. Instead, stress results from the interaction between stressors and the individual's perception and reaction to those stressors.

Stress is simply the body's non-specific response to any demand made on it. Stress is not by definition synonymous with nervous tension or anxiety. Stress provides the means to express talents and energies and pursue happiness; it can also cause exhaustion and illness, either physical or psychological heart attacks or accidents. The important thing to remember about stress is that certain forms are normal and essential. As the body responds to various forms of physical or psychological stress, certain predictable changes occur. These include increased heart rate, blood pressure (systolic and diastolic), and secretions of stimulatory hormones. These responses to stress will occur whether the stress is positive or negative in nature. In lay terms, it is known as the "fight or flight" mechanism. Continual exposure lowers the body's ability to cope with additional forms of psychological or physiological stress.

Review Of Literature

According to Dr. Bhavin U Pandya, Ms. Revati C Deshpande and Ms. Anushree Karani, (2012)^[1], stress in academic institutions can have both positive and negative consequences if not well managed. Academic institutions have different work settings compared to nonacademic and therefore one would expect

the difference in symptoms, causes, and consequences of stress. By identifying the sub issues of each component of academic stress among the MBA students of Gujarat Technological University affiliated colleges, the study could provide better insights to the academic administrators for initiating efforts to reduce the intensity of academic stress. Single cross sectional study was conducted to examine the relationships of independent and dependent variable by applying the self-administered survey questionnaire. With the help of literature review the various hypotheses to examine the relation between dependent and independent variable were also used. The procedure which is adopted is quantitative approach. Respondents were 116 students taken from all the five zones of Gujarat Technological University affiliated Master of Business Administration Colleges.

As observed by Lauren Bigham, Helen W. Bland, Bridget F. Melton (2012)^[2], College years have been deemed as one of the most stressful periods of a person's life. The millennial generations of college students are unique in characteristics, including the manner in which they handle stressors. An epidemiological cross-sectional study of randomly selected college students (N=246) completed the Stress Tolerance Questionnaire (STQ), which was comprised of checklists for stressors, symptoms, and coping strategies. Stress tolerance ratios (STRs) were calculated, and subjects divided into high or low stress tolerance groups. Ten lifestyle/coping factors (out of 29) were significantly associated with high stress tolerance (HST): one was a protective factor (feeling supported) while the nine others put a person at risk for low stress tolerance (cleaned apartment, prayed, called mom, used internet social network (among others) ($p < 0.05$). Coping mechanisms and lifestyle habits currently employed by the millennial college students are not only ineffective for alleviating stress, but also has the effect of putting these students at risk for low stress tolerance.

In previous research on psychological stress recovery, recovery activities and recovery experiences have been studied separately rather than jointly. The study of Jennifer M. Ragsdale, Terry A. Beehr, Simone Grebner, Kyunghee Han^[6], advanced previous knowledge about stress recovery by integrating the effects of these separate recoveries constructs within a single study and

examining them outside the work context. It proposed and tested an integrated model of the stress-recovery process that includes weekday stressors and weekend recovery activity behaviors, psychological recovery experiences, and recovery outcomes. Undergraduates (n = 221) from a Midwestern university reported on Friday about stressors experienced during the week, followed by a weekend during which recovery could occur. On Monday they reported their weekend activities and their current well-being. Results suggested that participating in specific recovery activities during a weekend and accompanying specific subjective recovery experiences reduced negative psychological outcomes.

An Overview of Stress Management

Stress is physiological and psychological imbalance. It arises due to the demands on a person and that person's inability to meet these demands. They handle stress by planning work, taking regular breaks and rejuvenating them. Stress can be positive or negatives. Positive stress is called eustress and negative stress is called distress. There is a difference between the ways in which eustress and distress affect the body. Eustress triggers the body alarm, enhances attention, performance, and creativity. It has temporary effects. For instance, a person applying for a visa to the US may be under eustress, and once he or she obtains the visa his or her stress levels come back to normal. Distress has a negative effect on the body. For instance, an individual who has lost his or her job may become depressed, which is a result of distress. Distress, if left unchecked, can have a serious effect on the body over a period of time. There are many times of significant change in our lives but leaving home for the first time is an especially important hurdle. The student years are times of oscillating emotions, with contradictions and conflicts as well as excitements and explorations. With new freedoms, enthusiasm can easily spill over to excess whether in work, play, sex, drink, or street drugs. Any one of these, if indulged in irresponsibly, can trigger health problems. Sorties into taking street drugs can change lives forever. It is only in retrospect that the hazards of taking street drugs are evident. Stress is seen as modern society's illness by professionals from different sectors. According to Kolko, David J. (1980) [9], stress is a negative emotional experience, accompanied by predictable physiological,

cognitive and behavioral changes that are directed either toward altering stressful circumstances or accommodating to its effects.

Sources of Stress

There are various sources of stress both at home and at work. The common ones can be classified into internal and external stress.

A. Internal Stress

Human beings have a tendency to worry about actions that may or may not take place. Internal stress generally happens when individuals worry about things outside their control. The personality of an individual plays a vital role in stress management. Every individual can be categorized into Type A and Type B personality. An individual of Type A personality has a continual sense of urgency and has an excessive competitive drive. He or she is always in a hurry and is impatient. People with Type A Personality are obsessive about winning and do not have the ability to spend leisure time productivity. These people are likely to be under stress even in minor situations.

People with Type B personality do not sense the urgency of time. They work at their own pace, with no need to prove their achievements. These people are less likely to be under stress. Studies suggest that people with Type A personality are at greater risk be under stress. Studies suggest that people with Type A personality are at greatest risk of getting heart attacks than people with Type B personality.

B. External Stress

This type of stress is the result of environmental influence on an individual. External stress is result of stress from the environment. This can be stress from family, work, peers, and friends. Physical conditions such as poor lighting, loud noise, poor seating arrangements, and extreme workplace temperatures (a too hot or too cold cabin) are also stressors. In particular, living in extreme climates can heighten an individual's stress level.

Effects of Stress

The human body's reaction to stress is natural. It results from the need to resist a stressful situation. For example, when a person is

nervous, there is an increase in his or her pulse rate. This is a 'fight or flight' response. However, his or her thinking ability and emotional balance are impaired the person can even suffer heart attack or a nervous breakdown. Too much of stress can tell upon a person's health. If neglected, it can lead to serious health disorders at a later stage.

Research Methodology

Type of Research: Descriptive Research

Field of Study: MBA students of Amet Business School, Chennai

Sample Size: 100

Sampling Technique: Convenient sampling

Data collection Technique:

Primary data – Collected through Questionnaire, Discussions and Scheduled interview

Secondary data - collected from various journals, periodicals and reports.

Questionnaire design:

The questionnaire included Open Ended Questions, Multiple Choice Questions and Dichotomous Questions.

Statistical analysis:

Collected data were arranged in logical of sequential order and the data was analysed using adequate quantitative tools.

Analysis of the Data and Inferences

Table 1: Gender wise classification

PARTICULARS	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
Male	96	96%
Female	4	4%
TOTAL	100	100%

Inference: The above table reveals that 96% of the respondents belong to male category, 4% of the respondents belong to female category.

Table 2: Group wise classification

PARTICULARS	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
Shipping & Logistics	97	97%
Human Resource	1	1%
Finance	2	2%
TOTAL	100	100%

Inference: The above table denotes that 97% of the respondents belong to Shipping and Logistics category, 1% of the respondents belong to Human Resource category, 2% of the respondents belong to Finance category.

Table 3: Hours spent for study

NO. OF HOURS	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
1-3	59	59%
4-6	41	41%
7-9	0	0%
9 and above	0	0%
TOTAL	100	100%

Inference: From the above table, it is seen that 59% of the respondents belong to 1-3 hours category, 41% of the respondents belong to 4-6 hours category, 0% of the respondents belong to 7-9 hours category, 0% of the respondents belong to 9 hours and above category.

Table 4 : Persons/Groups causing the stress.

BY WHOM	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
Parents	45	45%
Faculties	53	53%
Peer group	2	2%
Society	0	0%
TOTAL	100	100%

Inference: From the above table, it can be inferred that 45% of the respondents are stressed by Parents, 53% of the respondents are stressed by Faculty, 2% of the respondents are stressed by Peer group, 0% of the respondents are stressed by Society factors.

Table 5 : Relationship between students and faculties

PARTICULARS	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
Highly satisfied	14	14%
Satisfied	85	85%
Dissatisfied	1	1%
TOTAL	100	100%

Inference: The above table denotes that 14% of the respondents belong to highly satisfied category, 85% of the respondents belong to satisfied category, 1% of the respondents belong to dissatisfied.

Table 6 : Techniques used for managing stress

PARTICULARS	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
Meditation	34	34%
Going to temple	49	49%
Yoga	04	4%
Games	13	13%
TOTAL	100	100%

Inference: From the managing stress wise classification, it is seen that 34% of the respondents belong to Meditation category, 49% of the respondents belong to going to temple category, 4% of the respondents belong to Yoga, 13% of the respondents belong to Games.

Findings

- ✓ From the gender wise classification it is found that maximum 96% of the respondents are male and minimum 4% of the respondents are female.
- ✓ From the group wise stress classification it is found that maximum 97% of the respondents are shipping and Logistics and minimum 1% of the respondents are Human Resource.
- ✓ From the analysis of hours spent for study it is found that 59% of the respondents study for 1-3 hours and 0% of the respondents are 7-9 and 9 and above.
- ✓ From the analysis of affected by whom it is found that 53 % of the respondents are Faculties and 45% by parents.
- ✓ From the analysis of relationship between Students and Faculties it is found that 85% of the respondents are satisfied and 1 % of the respondents are dissatisfied.
- ✓ From the analysis Managing stress wise classification it is found that 49% of the respondents are going to temple and 4% of the respondents are doing yoga.

Suggestions

1. The management students should pay attention to their physical and mental health and examine their emotions at all times to avoid onset of stress-induced depression or physical disorders. Besides, they should learn to understand, accept and recognize their limits, take a positive attitude toward getting along with their friends, learn to express and manage their emotions and effectively manage their emotions so as to develop positive relations and an optimistic view of life.
2. In their learning process, they should cultivate an undaunted spirit. Once any stress-induced emotion arises, they should relax through an

appropriate channel, examine their own problems, and seek solutions.

3. Suppression of emotions is not the only approach to controlling emotions. While facing stress, they can take a different perspective and learn to cope with it by changing their views. Stress-induced emotions can be self-managed.
4. The management students should manage stress by active engagement. On one hand, they can learn various stress coping measures from various channels and transform anxiety or frustration caused by inadequate adaptation to stress. On the other hand, they should also enhance their emotional management abilities, monitor their emotion, and build their own emotions management models. If any stress arises, they should analyze the causes of the stress from a positive perspective and seek solutions or support from professional institutions.
5. Family support is helpful for students facing stress, no matter how well they are adaptable to the stress. While management students should take advantage of family support, their family members should try to understand their interests, specialties, and abilities so as to avoid having too high expectations of them and causing them additional stress.
6. The importance of healthy diversions, physical workout (Gym) and discussions with friends, Yoga, cannot be underestimated but unhealthy diversions like movie addiction, TV addiction, cellphone addiction, computer addiction are very harmful and should be avoided.
7. In general, the students must build a positive outlook and a confident self image.

Conclusion

Stress in academic institutions can have both positive and negative consequences if not well managed. Academic institutions have different work settings compared to non-academic and therefore one would expect the differences in symptoms, causes, and consequences of stress. By identifying the sub issues of each component of academic stress among the MBA students of AMET Business School, AMET University, the study provides better insights to the academic administrators for initiating efforts to reduce the intensity of academic stress.

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