

A Study of College Students In Relation To Anxiety and Examination Stress

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Abstract – Anxiety and Examination stress among college students has been a topic of interest for many years. College students experience high stress due to various reasons such as lack of preparation, style of their study and lack of needed information. When stress is perceived negatively or becomes excessive, it leads to anxiety before and during examinations and ultimately affects their academic achievement. The present study was conducted to know the examinations stress felt by college students under Arts, Science and Commerce stream of education. Further comparison was done to find out the level of stress felt by college students enrolled in under graduate and post graduate programmers. The sample consisted of 90 college students drawn using stratified random sampling method from two girl's colleges. A questionnaire was developed by the researcher to access examination stress and anxiety among college students. The result shows correlation between examination stress and anxiety of college students. On comparing the stress and anxiety among students of different stream, the students of Arts was found having highest stress and anxiety during examination followed by commerce students. There was no significant difference found in the stress and anxiety level of undergraduate and postgraduate students. Key Words: Examination Stress, Anxiety, College students, Arts, Science, Commerce

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INTRODUCTION

Academic stress can be conceptualized as a student's interactions between environmental stressors, the student's cognitive appraisal of and coping with the academic-related stressors, and psychological or physiological response to the stressors (Lee & Larson, 2000; Lou & Chi, 2000). Academic stress is a pervasive problem across countries, cultures, and ethnic groups, and must be viewed in its context (Wong, Wong, & Scott, 2006). Every student aspires to pursue academic success to achieve respect, family pride, and social mobility (Gow, Bella, Kember, & Hau, 1996). This results in extremely high academic demands and extraordinary pressure on students and specially adolescents (e.g., Bossy, 2000; Ho, 1996). As a consequence of stress and demands to perform well in examination the students are not able to enjoy their academic life and it becomes joyless and burden for them. Stress may be considered as any physical, chemical or emotional factor that causes bodily or mental unrest and that may be a factor in disease causation. Physical and chemical factors that can cause stress include trauma, infections, toxins, illnesses and injuries of any sort. Emotional causes of stress and tension are numerous and varied. A mild degree of stress and strain can sometimes be beneficial. For example, feeling mildly stressed when carrying out a project or assignment often compels us to do a good job, focus better and work energetically. But if the students feel intense stress before and

during examination, it has consequences for mental health and somatic symptoms (Lee & Larson, 2000; Verma & Gupta, 1990). As per the report of Banerjee's (2001), every year about 25,000 students in the age group of 18 to 20 years commit suicide during the examination month (i.e. March to June). Due to high examination stress, students spent less time in socializing and get engaged in passive and active leisure which may further magnify the effects of examination stress (Lee and Larson, 2000). Stress is something that causes strong feeling of worry or anxiety. It is a normal part of life and it is not necessarily harmful until and unless, it takes over the person to feel overwhelmed and even isolated. In fact getting stressed a bit about examination means that students really care about the result they will get. It pushes them to work hard to get a good score. But when anxiety caused by examination stress reached clinical or sub-clinical levels, it interfered with the ability of the students to perform at their potential. The inability to perform in turn led to a greater sense of distress (Raina, 1983). Stress and anxiety experienced during the examinations is often attributed to the fear of failure and can have lasting negative impacts on the self esteem of the student. Examination anxiety has been reported to produce debilitating cognitive effects including difficulties with memory and recalling information. There is a significant positive relation found between achievement motivation and academic achievement

and a negative relationship between anxiety and academic achievement (Alam, 2001).

The sign of stress before and during examination are, having irregular sleep, feeling of tiredness, isolated or sad, feeling ache all over, suffer from stomach upset, feeling of restlessness or leading to a condition where you are not able to recall whatever you studied. Getting panic, when you see a question and you cannot answer and your mind gone blank. It is experienced by many normal students and it is not very mysterious or difficult to understand the ways to manage it. It can be managed easily by following a plan of helpful suggestions. There are basically four main areas which can contribute to cause pre examination stress or anxiety. The first one is lifestyle Issues, which includes inadequate rest, poor nutrition and lack of efficient planning of the available time. If a student does not schedule the available time, he/she will not be able to cover the syllabus content at time resulting in stress. Even if he/she completes reading of full content and no time is left for revision, he/she may get confuse of one content with other resulting in a situation where the student feel as if he knows nothing or forgotten everything. So distributing the limited time by prioritizing your commitments can help in coping up with the stress. The second important thing to avoid stress before examination is to have few necessary information like examination dates, venue of examination, course content to be covered, paper required to sit in examination before in hand. Lack of any above mentioned information can cause stress before examination. Many students follow style of studying which lead to stress such as trying to memorize the content of textbooks, all night studying before exams, inefficient and inconsistent content coverage, not making revision notes. Besides these factors there are some psychological factors before examination may lead to examination stress or anxiety. Few students suffer from irrational beliefs or demands such as: "If I don't get a good score, I will lose my respect or I will be worthless". Some students undergoes through catastrophic predictions like: "I will fail no matter how much hard work I do". Higher Education system and Examination System in India Education is critical for economic and social development. It is crucial for building human capabilities and for opening opportunities. Without education, development can neither be broad based nor sustained. Recognizing the vital contribution of education to development, the government of India accorded due priority to education after independence and set the targets of providing access and equity at all level of education. But due to constitutional obligation of universalization of elementary education and emphasis led by international community on „Education For All“ (EFA), elementary stage of education got highest priority in government's policies and programs. The second priority has been given to develop higher education system. Elementary education creates the foundation for further learning whereas the importance of secondary education lies in the fact that it forms a link between elementary education and higher education. But higher education

system adds real value to human resources, and produce wealth creators and leaders in all fields – business, professions, politics, administration, and creative pursuits. Over the past seven decades, India made impressive strides in the field of higher education. The quality of the bulk of our graduates is appalling. The students are doing their best – they are studious and disciplined, they cram, clear entrance tests, pass examinations, and obtain degrees. But there is other side of this scenario where, many university graduates do not have even rudimentary knowledge, conceptual understanding, or problem-solving skills in their own discipline. A culture of rote learning, lack of application of knowledge, and a poor examination system have undermined our higher education. Most graduates lack basic communication skills, and have no problem solving capacity. Educated unemployment is on the rise, largely because most graduates cannot promote wealth creation and are therefore unemployable. Another fact related to students of higher education is the extreme pressure they feel as a result of cut throat competition for survival of the fittest. Everyone wants good grades in fact outstanding grades, necessary to excel in today's competitive professional world. Not only students but parents, teacher's expectations from their children have also been influenced by this trend. They expect higher grades from their children and put pressure on them to perform better. The success of students is decided by their examination score rather than the knowledge or skill they acquire. It is generally believed that a fair amount of examination stress is beneficial for academic success but sometimes excess of it may lead to anxiety, depression, examination phobia and many other psychological problems among students. The high level of stress during examination is not only the result of student's aspiration or parental expectation, the archaic and disgraceful examination system for higher education is equally responsible for it. The stress is often on testing the student's memory and rote learning. A careful memorizing of answers to questions posed in the three previous years (excluding the immediate past year) will guarantee high grades! Analytical skills, application of knowledge, problem-solving capacity and innovation are rarely tested. There is no stress on continuous appraisal and the student is only judged by his/her performance in a single final examination. There is an absolute disconnect between what is taught in the class and what is tested. One would imagine that the teacher who teaches the course is best suited to evaluate a student's performance in thasomewhere else grades the student's exam! This one size fits for all kind of an examination system does not leave any room for either continuous appraisal during the term of the course, or for testing the student's creativity, application of knowledge and problem solving skills. In the current higher education setup, excepting for elite Careful memorizing of answers to questions posed in three previous years (excluding the immediate past) will guarantee high grades! In most western universities, the professor who teaches the course evaluates the students throughout the duration of the course, administers tests or exams and grades the test

papers! Very often, the student's final grade for the course is published within a week after the finals and there is a transparent mechanism for addressing any issues the student may have with the way his/her work is evaluated or graded. The tragedy is that Indian students are smart, ambitious, hard working and are just responding to what the system is demanding. The entire education infrastructure with the myriad coaching institutes is feeding this demand. If only the nature of demand is altered, the students and the associated infrastructure will respond to adapt to the new conditions, and improve supply. There are many models of examinations for evaluating the students skillfully, and creating demand t course. But in the current system, a completely disconnected evaluator sitting for better education by redefining success. Reforming examination system to reduce examination stress at higher education level It was felt very strongly by academicians that there is a need of change in the examination system of higher education. They advocated introduction of the globally accepted credit based choice (CBC) system. Under this system, students can choose subjects on their own and can also ask the examiner to conduct the examination when the students are ready for them. "Subjects and date of examination are not imposed on students in the credit based choice (CBC) system. While the credit based choice (CBC) system has been operative in several countries since quite some time now, in India very few universities have introduced this system so far. Only 30 out of 569 universities in the country have implemented the system. Presently, most of the universities and colleges in India are practicing the annual and semester systems of examinations. "If we adopt the CBC system by revamping the traditional method of examination systems, we expect the gross enrollment in higher education to be increased and knowledge of students to improve. Although, there are many researches on relationship between examination stress and anxiety among adolescents. But they are mostly related to high school students. A dearth of studies on relationship between examination stress and anxiety among university student was found and that is the rationale behind taking this study to focus on college students. The primary goal of this paper is to examine how academic stress affects college students. It should be of interest for education policy makers in India to enhance their understanding of Indian students' examination stress and anxiety and to develop ideas about how to best utilize and manage the education system to promote the optimum academic performance and emotional development of students in India. Another goal of this paper is to establish a conceptual framework that includes the links between examination stress and anxiety in Indian Universities. This should be useful in guiding future researchers to conduct studies in the area of academic-related stress and anxiety in India. Therefore the study was taken up to find out the examination stress and anxiety of college students with the help of following objectives:

OBJECTIVES:

- To find out the examination stress and anxiety among college student during exam.
- To compare the level of examination stress and anxiety among college students of graduation and post graduation level.
- To compare the level of examination stress and anxiety during exam among
- Students of arts, science and commerce stream.

HYPOTHESIS:

- There is no significant relationship between adolescent perceived examination stress and anxiety.
- There is no significant difference between perceived examination stress and anxiety among student of science, arts and commerce.
- There is no significant difference between perceived examination stress and anxiety among student of undergraduate and postgraduate level. Research Design The present study is a descriptive research. The data was collected from the primary sources. Population: Population for the present study was college students.

Sample and Sampling Technique:-A total sample of 120 college students was selected by using Stratified random sampling technique. Out of those 120 students, 60 students were from graduation and 60 students were from post graduation level. Those 60 students of graduation level consisted of 20 students from Arts, 20 students from Science and 20 students from Commerce stream. The same distribution of students was done for students of post graduation. Tool: A self constructed tool was use for data collection. The questionnaire consisted of total 120 items. Out of those 120 items 60 items were designed to elicit the information on examination stress and rest of the 60 items were related to anxiety level during examination.

DATA ANALYSIS

Firstly The scores obtained through the administration of the questionnaire (Examination Stress: MEAN,SD: 31.41 5.04 and Anxiety: MEAN, SD: 27.46 5.69)shows that the correlation (0.79) between examination stress and anxiety is highly significant So the H₀ 1 is rejected which, states that there is no relationship between examination stress

and anxiety among college students. Students of college feel stress before examination and it leads to anxiety. High aspirations, poor study habits, more study problems, change in medium of instructions and low socio economic conditions, test anxiety, fear of failure, competition for grades, excessive academic load and concentration and memory are the factors responsible for examination were subjected to statistical analysis such as Mean, SD and Coefficient of Correlation with the help of SPSS version 20. Stress and anxiety (G Manjula and Vijaylaxmi A.H.M. 2012; Edmund 1984; Joost, 2007). It has been established through researches that moderate amount of stress helps to motivate students and at times increase their performance (Moore, Burrows & Dalziel, 1992). But excess of it leads to negative consequences among college students. Kohlon's (1983) study revealed that lack of parental help, congenial examination system, living up to parental expectation, attitude of the teachers and fear of examination were the stress causing factors.

Secondly students of Arts students feel high level of examination stress (Mean= 33.45) as compared to the students of Science (mean= 31.05) and Commerce (Mean= 29.75) stream. The mean value shown for the anxiety shows that perceived examination stress for students of Science and Arts stream does not differ much at undergraduate and postgraduate level. The t value for level of anxiety of students at UG and PG level was not found significant. That shows the similar trend. Students from Arts stream feels more anxious (Mean= 29.7) than students of Science (Mean=26.6) and Commerce (Mean= 26.1). This might be because of the nature of the subjects. means level of education does not make much difference in examination stress and anxiety felt by the students. However, in commerce stream, undergraduate students perceive higher level of stress and anxiety as compared to postgraduate students.

CONCLUSION:

Stress is marked by overly high performance standards, with high levels of worry, self-criticism of attention while preparing for or taking exams (Altmaier, 1983, p. 52). Too much stress can interfere with how a student prepares, concentrates, and performs. It was found in the study that examination stress is highly correlated with level of anxiety in college students. Among the students of Arts, Science and Commerce stream, the students of arts feels highest level of examination stress and anxiety followed by the students of Commerce stream. The least amount of examination stress and anxiety was found among students of science stream. When the level of stress and anxiety before and during the examination was compared between undergraduate and post graduate students, it was found that graduate and post graduate students feel more or less equal level of stress and anxiety during examinations. Some college students do not know how to properly prepare for a test and will perform poorly and are anxious as a result. More

emphasis is needed on understanding the impact of examinations on students, on identifying vulnerable individuals, and on the appropriateness of the current examination process (Fisher, 1994).

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