

Research Paper

## Assessment of Academic Stress among Students Pursuing Professional and Nonprofessional Courses

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### ABSTRACT

The present study is an attempt to assess the Academic Stress among students pursuing Professional and Non-professional Courses, along with the influence of few Demographic variables on Academic Stress. A total of 600 students (200 Professional and 400 Non-professional) studying in Mysuru city were randomly selected from various Professional and Non-professional Colleges in and around Mysuru city. The Academic Stress inventory (Lin & Chen, 2009), which measures the Stress of the students was measured in 7 domains. Data was subjected to two way Analysis of Variance, to find out the difference between Course type and Demographic variables, on domains of Academic Stress including total Academic Stress. Results revealed that students pursuing Professional Courses experienced significantly more total Academic Stress, Stress from teachers, Stress from results, studying in group Stress, and in peer Stress. Students from Professional and Non-professional Courses experienced similar levels of Stress from tests, Time Management, and self-inflicted Stress. Male students experienced significantly higher stress than female students only in 'Stress from tests' domain of Academic Stress. In total Academic Stress, Stress from teachers, studying in group Stress, and in Peer Stress, among students pursuing Professional Courses female students experienced higher Stress, where as in Non-professional Courses, male students experienced higher Stress.

**Keywords:** *Shyness, Academic Stress, Engineering students Introduction*

In today's world, Stress is the buzz word. Unfortunately, even students are not spared from Stress. Stress has been widely accepted as the main barrier for Academic success. Students in higher education are saddled with a lot of responsibilities and challenges (Imonikebe, 2009), which may sometime result in Stress. Higher education studies have become stressful day by day due to extremely high work load, future consciousness in students and due to expectations of significant others. Stress occurs to a person when his threshold level of tolerance is reached. Studies have revealed that students in both Professional and Non-

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professional Courses experience Stress in different ways. Waghachavare, Dhumale, Kadam, and Gore (2013), opined that various studies across the globe have emphasized that students undertaking Professional Courses, such as Medical and Dental studies, are subjected to higher Stress. It is a known fact that excessive Stress could lead to psychological problems like depression and anxiety. Further, their studies indicated that students from all the three fields studied were exposed to Stress and Academic factors were one of the most important stressors. In addition, study by Agarwal and Chahar (2007), revealed that students studying technology are experiencing role overload, role stagnation and self-role distance. However, study by Raut and Mundada (2016), revealed that Non-professional students have more anxiety than students of Professional Courses and they attributed it to the lack of guidance, lack of confidence, unemployment problems, competitions of career and above all, being unable to set goal for future life.

The present study was undertaken to assess the Academic Stress among students pursuing Professional and Non-professional Courses. Though, earlier studies have revealed that Professional students experience higher Stress than the kind of stress being experienced by students pursuing Non-professional Courses, it is relevant to find out whether the changing scenario of the education system, limited job opportunities, influence of new media, increased competition for jobs etc., bring about Stress among students pursuing Non-professional Courses. It is relevant to mention that studies available on students of Professional Courses, comparative studies between students pursuing Professional and Non-professional are not many, hence, the need for the present study. This study undertakes to compare the Academic Stress in various domains and examine the difference between students of Professional and Non-professional Courses, including the influence of gender on these selected domains of Academic Stress.

### **METHOD**

#### ***Sample:***

The sample for the study was selected from 3 Engineering Colleges, 2 Medical Colleges and 6 Colleges of Non-professional Courses (Arts, Science, Commerce and Management) in and around Mysuru city. Questionnaires - Academic Stress inventory along with Demographic details were distributed to a total of 600 students studying in various disciplines and requested to return them at the earliest. Consequently, a total of 200 students from Professional Courses and 400 students from Non-professional Courses were included in the study.

#### ***Tools***

**1. Personal data Sheet: Personal and Socio-demographic information is collected in this sheet.**

2. Academic Stress Inventory (Lin & Chen, 2009): Academic Stress (developed by Lin and Chen, 2009) contained 34 statements on 7 domains of Stress. They were Stress from teachers, Stress from results, Stress from tests, Studying in group Stress, Peer Stress, Time

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Management Stress and Self-inflicted Stress. The brief description of them is as follows: 1. Stress from teachers: including teaching materials, teaching and exercise items. 2. Stress from results: Stress from parents, including conflicts between expectations and opinions and drops in grades. 3. Stress from tests: worry about how to prepare for a test and re-do the compulsory Courses. 4. Studying in group Stress: included exercise reports, grouping, etc. 5. Peer Stress: included Academic competition, peer interferences, etc. 6. Time Management Stress: Social activities and student association, Time Management and choices, etc. 7. Self-inflicted Stress: such as self-expectation, interests of Course selection, etc. The respondents had to answer the scale using Likert's five-point scale and the answering methods were from the answers of the actual six months' experiences. The  $\alpha$  value of the overall Academic Stress inventory was 0.90. High scores indicate higher stress in all the Domains.

### ***Procedure:***

The test was administered to students pursuing both Professional and Non-professional Courses by asking them to fill up the relevant Demographic details. Later they were requested to answer academic stress inventory. They were asked to indicate their responses in the respective sheets given to them. Once the data was collected, they were screened for completeness, scored and fed to the Computer. The data was analyzed using two way Analysis of Variance taking scores of various domains of Academic Stress as dependent variables, and Course type and gender as independent variables.

Table 1 presents mean Stress scores of male and female students pursuing Professional and Non-professional Courses on various domains of Academic Stress and results of 2-way ANOVA

## **RESULTS:**

### ***Course and Domains of Academic Stress:***

In total Academic Stress, we find that students pursuing Professional Courses (Mean 116.63) experienced significantly ( $F=8.34$ ;  $p=.004$ ) higher Stress than students pursuing Non-professional Courses (mean 113.02). In individual domains also-Stress from teachers ( $F=4.54$ ;  $p=.034$ ), Stress from results ( $F=13.05$ ;  $p=.001$ ), studying in group Stress ( $F=9.64$ ;  $p=.002$ ), and in peer Stress ( $F=3.90$ ;  $p=.049$ ), students pursuing Professional Courses experienced significantly higher Stress than students pursuing Non-professional Courses. However, in individual domains –Stress from tests ( $F=2.65$ ;  $p=.104$ ), Time Management Stress ( $F=0.22$ ;  $p=.639$ ) and in self-inflicted Stress ( $F=2.86$ ;  $p=.091$ ), no significant mean differences were observed between students pursuing Professional Courses and students pursuing Non-professional Courses.

### ***Gender and Domains of Academic Stress:***

In total Academic Stress, male and female did not differ significantly ( $F=3.49$ ;  $p=.062$ ), as they had statistically equal scores on total Academic Stress. However, in one of the individual domains of Academic Stress, i.e., in Stress from tests, male students (mean 13.47)

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experienced significantly ( $F=18.37$ ;  $p=.000$ ), higher Stress than female students (mean 12.22). In rest of the domains –Stress from teachers ( $F=0.78$ ;  $p=.378$ ), Stress from results ( $F=0.03$ ;  $p=.857$ ), studying in group Stress ( $F=0.03$ ;  $p=.865$ ), Peer Stress ( $F=.03$ ;  $p=.868$ ), Time Management Stress ( $F=0.94$ ;  $p=.332$ ), and self-inflicted Stress ( $F=2.34$ ;  $p=.126$ ), male and female students did not differ significantly in their individual domains of Academic Stress.

### *Course, Gender and Domains of Academic Stress:*

In total Academic Stress, significant interaction was observed between course type and gender ( $F=6.61$ ;  $p=.010$ ), where we find that among students pursuing Professional Courses, female students experienced higher Stress, whereas among Non-professional students male students experienced higher Academic Stress, than female students. Similar significant interaction effects were observed in individual domains like Stress from teachers ( $F=7.71$ ;  $p=.006$ ), studying in group Stress ( $F=7.82$ ;  $p=.005$ ), and in Peer Stress ( $F=11.06$ ;  $p=.001$ ). In rest of the individual domains-Stress from results, Stress from tests, Time Management Stress and self-inflicted Stress no significant interactions were observed between Course type and gender.

## DISCUSSION

### *Major Findings*

- Students pursuing Professional Courses experienced significantly more total Academic Stress, Stress from teachers, Stress from results, studying in group Stress, and in Peer Stress.
- Students from Professional and Non-professional Courses experienced similar levels of Stress from tests, Time Management and in self-inflicted Stress.
- Male students experienced significantly higher Stress than female students only in ‘Stress from tests’ domain of Academic Stress.
- In total Academic Stress, Stress from teachers, studying in group Stress, and in Peer Stress, among students pursuing Professional Courses, female students experienced higher Stress, where as in Non-professional Courses, male students experienced higher Stress.

The results of the present study are in agreement with studies done earlier. Behere, Yadav and Behere (2011) in their study found that Medical and Engineering students had Stress level of such a degree that requires clinical attention, Singh and Singh (2008) too found that Medical and Engineering students had higher Stress than students pursuing Non-professional Courses. Agarwal and Chahar (2007) also, in their study, indicated that role overload, role stagnation and self-role distance were found to be the major stressors experienced by the students. Interestingly, Studies done across the world too have revealed that students pursuing Medical and Dental Courses experience higher levels of Stress (Sharified, et al, 2012; Al-Dabal et al, 2010; Al-Dubai, Al-Nagar, Alshagga & Rampal, 2011; Supe, 1998). Waghachavare, Dhumale, Kadam, and Gore (2013), opined that Engineering students take

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half-yearly examinations, as compared to the annual examinations taken by Medical and Dental students. Theoretically too, the higher frequency of examinations should lead to a higher prevalence of Stress among Engineering students. In an earlier study by D'Souza (2015), Shyness also leads to Academic Stress predominantly cognitive/affective and physiological domains. According to [www.overcoming-Shyness.com](http://www.overcoming-Shyness.com), Shyness contributes a lot to a person's Stress levels and in turn, Stress is known to be one of the major contributors to ill-health.

Yet another finding of the present study is that, in Professional Courses, female students experienced higher Stress, where as, in Non-professional Courses male students experienced higher Stress, which was, further, substantiated by the study by Waghachavare, Dhumale, Kadam, and Gore (2013). Even in other countries similar trends were documented (Abdulghani *et al.* 2011 ; and Abu-Ghazalehet *al.*2011).

In short, the study highlights the fact that students studying Professional Courses experience higher Stress. A few studies have already indicated that college students in the present scenario experience high levels of Stress in many areas of life. As a matter of fact, Researchers in this stream need to focus on these issues, and try to come out with the potential stressors which are detrimental to an individual's all round development in his/her bio-psycho-social spheres, so that effective strategies can be built to prevent these stresses in advance.

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**Table 1**

**Mean stress scores of male and female students pursuing professional and non-professional courses on various domains of academic stress and results of 2-way ANOVA**

Course	Gender	Domains of stress							
		Stress from teachers		Stress from results		Stress from tests		Studying in group stress	
		Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D
Professional	Male	31.22	5.33	17.87	3.67	13.30	3.21	17.07	4.38
	Female	32.10	5.63	17.92	3.52	11.71	4.15	18.03	3.16
	Total	31.66	5.49	17.90	3.58	12.51	3.79	17.55	3.84
Non professional	Male	31.52	4.94	16.66	3.54	13.56	3.53	16.97	3.42
	Female	29.82	5.65	16.73	4.37	12.47	3.56	16.12	3.95
	Total	30.67	5.37	16.69	3.97	13.01	3.59	16.55	3.72
Total	Male	31.42	5.07	17.06	3.62	13.47	3.43	17.00	3.76
	Female	30.58	5.73	17.12	4.14	12.22	3.78	16.76	3.81
	Total	31.00	5.42	17.09	3.88	12.84	3.66	16.88	3.78
F (Course) <sub>1, 596</sub>		F=4.54; p=.034		F=13.05; p=.001		F=2.65; p=.104		F=9.64; p=.002	
F (Gender) <sub>1, 596</sub>		F=0.78; p=.378		F=0.03; p=.857		F=18.37; p=.000		F=0.03; p=.865	

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Course	Gender	Domains of stress			
		Stress from teachers	Stress from results	Stress from tests	Studying in group stress
F (Interaction) <sub>1, 596</sub>		F=7.71; p=.006	F=.01; p=.976	F=0.66; p=.419	F=7.82; p=.005

**Table 1 cont'd**

*Mean stress scores of male and female students pursuing professional and non-professional courses on various domains of academic stress and results of 2-way ANOVA*

Course	Gender	Domains of stress							
		Peer stress		Time management stress		Self-inflicted stress		Total academic stress	
		Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D
Professional	Male	13.22	3.08	10.09	2.64	13.42	2.98	116.19	13.47
	Female	14.12	3.12	9.84	2.58	13.35	3.33	117.07	12.43
	Total	13.67	3.13	9.97	2.61	13.39	3.15	116.63	12.93
Non professional	Male	13.61	3.42	10.19	2.88	13.31	3.06	115.80	13.15
	Female	12.61	3.34	9.97	2.80	12.52	3.44	110.24	16.91
	Total	13.11	3.41	10.08	2.84	12.91	3.28	113.02	15.38
Total	Male	13.48	3.31	10.15	2.80	13.34	3.03	115.93	13.24
	Female	13.11	3.34	9.93	2.72	12.80	3.42	112.51	15.87
	Total	13.30	3.33	10.04	2.76	13.07	3.24	114.22	14.70
F (Course) <sub>1, 596</sub>		F=3.90; p=.049		F=0.22; p=.639		F=2.86; p=.091		F=8.34; p=.004	
F (Gender) <sub>1, 596</sub>		F=0.03; p=.868		F=0.94; p=.332		F=2.34; p=.126		F=3.49; p=.062	
F (Interaction) <sub>1, 596</sub>		F=11.06; p=.001		F=.01; p=.942		F=1.64; p=.201		F=6.61; p=.01	

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