



Academic Stress And Coping Strategies Of Adolescents

Dr. Seema Rani Sethi Assistant professor MGN College of Education, Jalandhar. Email ID : drseemagsethi@gmail.com

Abstract

Every undergraduate student in today's extremely competitive human race is having academic situations that consist of academic stress, apathy in attending class to comprehend subject matter, fear of falling behind with studies and course work, and face challenges to fulfil academic and grade standards. These situations are caused by today's extremely competitive human race. The academic stress of these college students act as a motivating factor when appropriate coping strategies are used to control academic stress. Every undergraduate should identify and acknowledge stress signals and consequently adopt associated coping techniques rather than trusting on 'magical powers' of time since delay, disregard and obstruction might aggravate stress among adolescents.

Keywords: Stress; Academic Stress; adolescents; Coping strategies.

Introduction

Every undergraduate student is excited for their impending college life, which will bring them new opportunities and delight; however, at the same time, it can be overwhelming because it presents a lot of challenges and introduces a lot of anxieties, both of which are extremely common for undergraduate students to become depressed. The majority of student's report feeling helpless and out of control in an environment that is fraught with a variety of obstacles, impulses, and unfavourable experiences, to which they have difficulty adapting and which causes them to feel overwhelmed. Undergraduate students are subjected to a more demanding academic schedule, which can easily induce enormous amounts of stress (Zinsser, W. 2009).

Stress

The English word "stress" comes from the Latin word "strictus," which can be translated as "tight" or "narrow."

Millions of first-year college students are adversely affected by stress, which is characterised by feelings of dread, depression, and reaching one's lowest point. Everyone who goes to college will, without exception, go through their own individual and distinctive kind of stress. It is possible to simplify the concept of stress by defining it as a

perceptual phenomena that arises from comparison between demands, whether they are pleasant or unpleasant, and one's ability to cope with them. Remember that some forms of stress are healthy and even necessary in order to keep a person challenged, driven, and stimulated. This is the most crucial aspect of stress to keep in mind. The beneficial kind of stress, known as eustress, is not only beneficial but also joyful and necessary (Laura, 2011). However, the negative type of stress, known as distress, can be harmful if it is not well managed. Undergraduate students can have all elements of their bodies, including their physical, mental, emotional, cognitive, and social abilities, impacted by being in a constant state of stress (Womble, S.L. 2001). According to the definitions provided by Vermunt and Steensman (2005) and Keinan et al. (2007), stress is the sense of a mismatch between the demands of one's surroundings (stressors) and one's own capacity to meet those expectations. According to Campbell (2006), the unfavourable reaction that people have to excessive pressure or other forms of demands placed on them is what is meant by the definition of stress.

Stress is defined by Arnold (2000) as a force that exerts an influence over a psychological or physical factor to the point that it is pushed beyond its range of stability, causing a strain within the individual.

Academic Stress

Undergraduate students who are making the adjustment to life in college report feeling significantly more stressed out as a result of the academic strain they are under. The term "academic stress" refers to the mental and emotional strain that can be brought on by the responsibilities of college life (Dedeyn, 2008). When attending college or university, one potential source of stress is the academic workload. Stress from academic obligations has been linked to a variety of unfavourable health effects, including clinical depression and physical sickness (Mac George, Samter & Gillihan, 2005). According to the findings of a study that was commissioned by Grad Resources and carried out by sociologist R. Woodberry (2010), the patterns of stress are still prevalent even in modern times. Sixty percent of the 675 students surveyed, and 63 percent of the female students, reported that they feel they require a stronger "balance in life." 58 percent of the women who participated in the survey identified "burnout" as one of their primary concerns, indicating that they were at risk for experiencing it. An additional finding from this most recent poll reveals that 85 percent of Hispanic students surveyed identified stress as a primary source of concern in their lives (compared to whites at 54 percent, African Americans at 47 percent and Asians at 44 percent). An alarming 43 percent of all graduate students were surveyed, and they responded that the degree of stress they are experiencing is "greater than they can bear." According to the responses from the students who took the survey (n=20,507), the most significant barrier that stands in the way of college students' academic performance is academic stress. The category of stress (32.9 percent) outranked other barriers to learning such as troubles sleeping (25.4%), having a cold, flu, or sore throat (24.8%), being concerned for a friend or family member (18.1%), or having depression or anxiety disorders (15.5%). (Acha, 2007).

According to Stowell (2004), "the term "Examination Stress" should be reserved for situations in which a discrete exam is utilised as a stressor. On the other hand, the phrase

"Academic Stress" is more suited to represent the sustained academic pressures that are connected with exam periods."

Sources of Academic Stress

In their pursuit of higher education, students at the undergraduate level often find themselves under academic pressure. It is possible for such encounters to have a detrimental impact on a student's motivation and overall performance if they are interpreted in a poor context. In addition, it has been demonstrated that when these experiences are allowed to continue for an extended period of time and are seen as being unmanageable, they can provoke feelings of helplessness, sadness, and stress, putting some students' academic futures in peril. The following is a list of some of the sources of academic stress that have been observed: -

I Greater academic demands

The environment in colleges and universities is more competitive, the other students are more motivated, and the lecturers have higher expectations. These increased academic standards and expectations are even more obvious in students who are enrolled in lower-level undergraduate programmes because it is presumed that they would be more independent. Undergraduate students who are unable to meet these academic requirements and norms frequently experience stress (Chemers, Martin , Garcia and Ben , 2001).

(ii) Grade Competition

Our educational system is geared more toward encouraging students to compete with one another for grades and less toward really educating students. Because receiving consistently low results in examinations can result in both disappointment and expulsion, grade competition is recognised as a dynamic component that contributes to an undergraduate student's degree of stress. Depression, which can lead to absenteeism or a feeling of hopelessness, is a direct result of poor academic performance (Archer and Carroll, 2003).

(iii) A Heavy Workload

The workload required for college is noticeably more complex than that of high school, and students may expect significantly less assistance from their parents and teachers. Because of the demanding nature of the coursework, the complex nature of the exams, and other academic challenges, as well as the more autonomous nature of the college learning structure, many first-year and returning students find that they have to put in long, difficult hours of studying, which causes them to feel stressed (Scott, E. 2009).

(iv) Pressure from Society

While first-year college students face the most obvious social challenges, which typically include leaving one's entire support structure behind, establishing a new social network, adjusting to being away from home for the first time, and finding less support from their parents, most students have to deal with some level of social stress at some point in their academic careers (Nowakowska,et.al. 2001).

(v) Time Management In general, undergraduate students are unable to grasp a huge quantity of material in a short period of time, and this inability contributes to the stress that these students experience. When you have too many things to do at once, you are more likely to become confused, forget things, and feel overwhelmed (Misra and Ranjita, 2000).

(vi) Financial Responsibilities

The cost of college is significant. There are some students who are fortunate enough to receive financial assistance from their parents, but there are many others who struggle to reconcile a low-paying job with the enormous obligations they already have. Students who make very little money often experience anxiety because of their financial predicaments (Danielle, 2010).

(vii) Environment

The new environment will have new characteristics, and the undergraduate students will need to acclimate themselves to the new places, people, and schedules as soon as possible. Within a few weeks of their move to a new location, several students report experiencing elevated levels of depression and absentmindedness in their daily lives (Murray, et.al.2000).

(viii) Extra- curricular Activities

Undergraduate students are put under a lot of pressure by colleges to take part in extracurricular activities such as sports, festival celebrations, band, and volunteer work. These activities are considered to be valuable college experiences. The existence of them in a student's daily routine might induce stress in ways that go well beyond the student's acceptance of them (Hart, A.2009).

(ix) Parental expectations

Every parent hopes that their offspring will excel academically and socially at college, and that they will receive high grades. The majority of parents do not evaluate and comprehend their children's capabilities before judging them against those of other children, which might cause their children to get frustrated and stressed out. (Saxena, R. 2011).

(x) Peer Pressure

Undergraduate students consistently face pressure from their peers to skip courses and examinations, experiment with substances, and indulge in immoral behaviours, all of which can be upsetting for the students involved. Even when an individual makes an effort to withstand the influence of their peers, stress can still build up (Mary, et.al. 2007).

(xi) Continuous evaluation

Students in the undergraduate programme are subjected to ongoing evaluation in the form of weekly, periodic, and semester examinations. This places an unnecessary load on the students, which in turn leads to increased levels of stress among the student body (Ross, S. E., Niebling, B. C. and Heckert, T. M. 2000).

(xii) Having a lack of motivation

The vast majority of first-year and second-year college students have a lower level of enthusiasm in college courses and the coursework associated with them. Learning calls for persistence, expertise, labour, and effectiveness; however, students typically lack the will to learn, and when learning is imposed upon them, they experience agitation (Heller, et.al. 2001).

(xiii) Other Stresses

Undergraduate students frequently face a variety of additional pressures, which can be found in quite a few different forms. Many students have erratic schedules because they stay up late to study, wake up very early for their classes, and try to jam as much work and fun into their schedules as they possibly can. The responsibilities that come with living more independently, such as doing your own washing and getting auto insurance, can frequently be a source of stress.

Identifying the Symptoms

There are certain signs that can be used as an advanced indicator that potentially dangerous or traumatic situations are on the horizon. These symptoms can be divided into the following three categories:

(i) Behavioral characteristics such as irritability, inhibition, aggressive behaviour, and self-medication to name a few examples

(ii) Physiological conditions, such as headaches, migraines, stomach disorders, and high blood pressure are examples of these

(iii) Apprehension, nervousness, low self-esteem, and forgetfulness are some examples of psychological conditions.

Students need to first accept that there is a problem before they can move on to the next step, which is to identify these symptoms. If either of these signs is seen in the kids, then the root cause analysis and any other necessary remediation should be carried out (Hulstein, 2009).

Undergraduate students can learn effective coping strategies to stop the destructive cycle of burnouts if they first recognise the impact of the academic environment and its oppressive nature in correlation with personal characteristics of undergraduates such as perfectionism and their tendency to overachieve, and then identify the physiological and cognitive symptoms that indicate emotional exhaustion.

Strategies for Dealing with the Stress of Schoolwork

The use of coping mechanisms is always going to play a significant part in the way that undergraduate students deal with stressful academic events. Examining academic pressure and working on a solution that will either alleviate it or eliminate it completely is the primary goal of this study. We should build up a healthy and harmonious manner to handle academic stress rather than discovering and adopting a short term plan to cope with academic stress in under graduates. Disregard and hindrance can both contribute to an increase in the amount of stress that is experienced by these students. The following are some examples of appropriate coping strategies: -

I Keep the goal in mind while remaining realistic

Undergraduates should, according to the findings of the various studies and research on academic goals, develop SMART goals since these goals are more likely to be achieved, and as a result, students will experience lower levels of stress while working toward achieving them (Meyer and Paul, J. 2003).

Specific, Measurable, and Attainable are the three components that make up the SMART acronym.

R – Realistic

T – Timely

(ii) Reframe difficulties

Try to view stressful situations from a more positive and extensive perspective, and reframe problematic situations rather than fuming about them. This will give an opportunity to pause, reorganise, and improve the situation, and undergrads will feel less stressed if they re-surface in the future. Try to view stressful situations from a more positive and extensive perspective. Reframe problematic situations (Seelig, 2012).

(iii) Maintain healthy behaviours

Undergraduates should make it a priority to maintain healthy habits (such as a balanced diet, normal sleeping hours, and meditations), as doing so not only ensures a life full of vitality and vivacity, but also serves as an essential component of an effective stress management strategy for their academic careers. (Scott and E. Scott 2009.)

(iv) Don't worry about being worried about being anxious.

A stressed-out undergraduate student will have the impression that they are on the verge of collapse, and that everything is just about hanging on by a thread at that time. The most effective method for dealing with stress is to avoid becoming freaked out by the fact that one is already anxious. Admitting that you are stressed out is the first step toward finding a solution to the problem. Concentrating on it will only make things appear worse than they are (Lucier, 2011).

(v) Expand Optimism

"What doesn't kill us makes us stronger" When you are faced with significant academic problems, you should strive to see them as chances for personal development. Consider what you could have done differently to avoid adding to the tension, and use what you've discovered to make better decisions in the future. (Krypel, M.N. 2010).

(vi) Make the most of the time you have available to you.

One of the numerous strategies that may be utilised to avoid caving in to the pressures of excessive stress is practising efficient time management. Plan ahead for stressful events and their impacts, and do so with the knowledge that you have gained from anticipating them. The ability to effectively manage one's time and to carry a daily planner in order to prioritise one's work can provide students who have not yet completed their undergraduate degrees the sense of being a more organised and less frazzled student (Cherry, K. 2011).

(vii) Don't waste your time trying to control things that you can't control.

There are many aspects of life that are outside of our control, particularly the actions of other others. Instead of worrying about them, you should concentrate on the aspects of the situation that are under your control, such as the response that you decide to provide to challenges (Makin, 2011).

(viii) Retrospect to prior successes

Take a time to think about all the things in your life that you are grateful for, especially the positive characteristics and gifts that you possess, whenever stress begins to get the better of you. Keeping things in perspective is made easier with the help of this straightforward tactic (Bhatnagar, Mathur and Sharma, 2007).

(ix) Establish a social networking presence

Undergraduates should surround themselves with happy and successful people, because the lessons and insights these individuals have gained throughout their lives have the power to motivate and inspire others, and because by imitating these individuals, students can learn effective and efficient ways to deal with stress. Students who have not yet graduated from college should make an effort to broaden their social networks and establish friendships with people they can count on in times of need (Staff, M. C. 2008).

(x) Accept your lot in life with grace.

Failure and disenchantment are relatively mild and short-lived, such as the upheaval we feel during times of emotional collapse. However, failure and disenchantment can be more serious and long-lasting, precipitated by any number of misfortunes, including ill health, financial crisis, or the death of a loved one. The ability to maintain one's dignity while demonstrating the ability to draw on one's own internal reservoirs of courage and fortitude is required of undergrads (Wong, P.T.P. and Reker, G. T. 2005).

(xi) You need to put an end to wallowing in your woes.

Undergraduates need to realise that they are not born with the purpose of making other people happy and living up to the standards that they have set for the eternal. They need to stop trying to be flawless all the time and be taught how to think in a logical and positive way (Mendelsohn, S. 2012).

(xii) Build comfortable environment

Undergraduates need to demonstrate a willingness to make reasonable modifications to their new environments. This will give them the confidence to interact with new people and new circumstances, and it will also make it easier for them to deal with stress in an appropriate manner (Sykes, G. 2012)

(xiii) Maintain a Spiritual Practice

In most cases, a healthier lifestyle is one that incorporates some form of religious or spiritual practise. Since praying and meditating are relieving stress for many people, especially older people, undergraduate students should pray, meditate, or do yoga to lower their levels of stress (Nelson, D. 2011).

(xiv) Consult an Expert If You Need Assistance

Undergraduates should seek professional assistance as soon as possible if they are experiencing tremendous academic stress and their coping mechanisms are not effective. Waiting can simply make the situation worse (Stephens, 2007).

Conclusion

An undergraduate's time spent in college can be one of the most exhilarating times of their lives; the introduction of new ambitions and perspectives, as well as the opportunity to make new friends and enjoy greater levels of personal freedom, can all contribute to an exhilarating and life-altering experience. Attending college comes with a lot of enthusiasm, but it also comes with a lot of stress because there are a lot of new activities, decisions, responsibilities, and expenses involved. It almost goes without saying that college is full of excitement. Academic pressure is something that every first-year student is used to and accustomed to feeling, but if it isn't managed properly, it has the potential to become overpowering. The good news is that there is an abundance of readily available coping skills that can direct undergraduates toward maintaining control over their academic stress, and a significant amount of scientific effort is likely to be of assistance to them. Instead of putting their faith in the purported "magical powers" of time, undergraduates would be better served by recognising the warning signs that indicate the onset of potentially dangerous and distressing circumstances and committing themselves to a stress-reduction strategy. The success of students should be improved by the provision of counselling regarding coping skills.

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