



PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS AMONG STUDENTS: BURDENED BY STUDY WORKLOAD

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ABSTRACT

Academic workload influence on student and caused stress. This study aims to identify the stress among the student's due academic work load and its affects various Physical and psychological factors. The study has conducted from the 160 students of three universities among male and female under graduate & post-graduate students. Results analysed by bivariate correlation and found that students worry about their grades have best effort has been made for achieving higher grades ($r=0.166^*$) & they depress about the grades ($r=0.264^{**}$). While academic workload exert strain during exam and have sleep disturbance ($r=0.353^{**}$). The study concentration associated with difficult to manage other activities of life ($r=0.300^{**}$). Moreover academic workload triggered the physical and psychological symptoms like Pain (headache, stomach ache and body pain) ($r= 0.207^{**}$) but higher study concentration tends to less tension about their assessment and papers.

Keywords: Academic workload, Stress, Psychological distress

INTRODUCTION

The University life is most crucial time-period for a student. The goals are to be built for professional field. University education provide socio-cultural skills with the technological advancement to student in order to get economic efficiency (Arnold , Loan-Clark, Harrington, & Hunt , 1999) or the ability to bear one's own financial burden. These abilities are built through achieving co-curricular and extracurricular activities. All these activities are learnt along with academic achievement of curricular activities.

Graduation level of education of four years is getting by eight semesters ((HEC), 2015). In each semester fifteen to eighteen credit hours is essential to attaining for students must complete each semester. Though semester system the syllabus also will be less, various topic needn't combine in a same paper as well as students get more chance to improve themselves. However, the few months of semester duration imposing high academic workload and unrest among student's behaviour. Although, it is proactive system, regular assessments such as, quizzes, presentations, assignments, research projects, class

activities and mid or final papers, engaging students and teachers more active with potential efforts. This effort in each subject is essential of any student for achieving grades. Everyday students have to ready for a new task, the students face challenge and learn new aspect of knowledge. It has been drastically changed in traditional annual system to semester system for the students, and some are over-burdened due to lack of command in language, insufficient knowledge and incompatible environment of social learning (Alf , Keithia, & & Ronald, 2002). The fear of receiving less grades, demand of Parental and teacher's expectation, to cope up new challenges, maintain co-curricular (Shephard, 1997)and extracurricular activities side by side create tension among the students. Ultimately this situation is stressful and demanding overwhelming burden on learner and provide minimal opportunity to relax and recreate and sometimes affects in serious sleep deprivation.

During the first semester of graduate programmes, however, learning has been associated with uncertainty about faculty expectations and appropriate study behaviours, unclear curricular demands,

and concerns with assessment (Moffat, McConnachie, Ross, & Morrison, 2004). Mostly students hesitate to discuss with friends and teachers. Burden of work related to daily assignment. Notes, presentation and quiz preparing exhaust the students in resulting academic underachievement and difficulties in behavioural adjustment such as aggression, depression. (Sampson, 1966) (MacKeith, Silva, McGree, & William, 1985).

The perception of health is conceived by people in the manner of physical health, but they ignore mental health. Mental health deterioration caused life-threatening diseases as Cardiovascular and Cancer that are fatal diseases. (Russ, Stamatakis, Hammer, Starr, Kivimaki, & Batty, 2013). Stress, Depression and Anxiety are the interrelated component of Psychological disorder of mental disease. Distress is used by the health professional in the context of Physical, Emotional & Spiritual condition, Psychological distress is associated to strain, stress & distress. (Selye, 1974). It is a change in emotional status of discomfort (Sheila, 2004). This condition is a combination

of depression and the stress & unpleasant mood with least energy and lack of interest ((APS), 2000) in the activities. Indication of these diseases among students' effects on their profession and lives (Al-Naggat & Al-Naggat, 1987). Undergraduate Malaysian students were observed moderate to extremely severe level of depression, that were 13.9% to 29.3%, 51.5% to 55.0% and 12.9% to 21.6% respectively (Gan, Mohammad Nasir, Shariff, & Hazizi, 2011) (Al-Ani, Radeef, & Ghazi, 2015). Students have selected the academic and personal factors among top ten stressors (Radeef, Faisal, Ali, & Ismail, 2014). As indicated by Porter, 60% dropouts' undergraduate students recorded in first two years (Porter, 1990). First two years are heartache, they understand subject and study pattern. Safree observed high stress level (1.66) among students of first two years and they achieved less grades and less stress 0.66 in last two years of graduation with high marks achievements (Safree, Yasin, & Mariam Adawiah, 2011). Steinberg and Darling specified that 50% of university students who consulted mental health service complained of challenges in

study, anxiety, tension, and depression which contributed to poor grades in courses (Steinberg, 1994).

Parents who are capable to provide positive environment to their children that enhance their academic self-efficacy. Successful parents in their professional and academic fields motivates child's aspiration (Wentzel, 1998). Garge studied that parental involvement in their child's studies has great effort on children' academic self-efficacy (Garg, Kauppi, Lewko, & Urajinik, 2002). Parental influence and attachment to their children about their studies and resolving the issues also helpful to decreases the stress and depression.

Students stress may be defined as the experienced by a student of unpleasant, negative emotion, such as anger, anxiety, depression, tension resulting from some aspect of their work as a student. The academic stress among students develop due to many reasons, some are discussed below:

Selection of Course: Most of the time students select course without any counselling and improper guidance and lack of interest. They select those courses and discipline in which more

enrolment possible or their friends and family members force to take. Whether the course is tough (*Science subject*) or there is not any personal interest to take a course.

Expectation of parents and teachers:

Parents demand their adults to be first despite of weak and incapable learning. Teachers also motivated every student to work hard with all assessments for the sack of cognitive achievement through academic learning. Students sometime can't fulfil their demands. Unexpected demands create stress among students (Misra , McKean, West , & Russo, 2000), but this stress related to concern is often personal concern about their studies (Vivien S., Yeo Lay, Rebecca P., & Chong Wan, 2008).

Regular assessments in short duration.

Short duration of semester, that is eighteen weeks, students have to prepare for regular assessments. They must make assignments, prepare quizzes, presentations, papers and other assessments for each subject. Some-time it is too difficult to manage time for each assessment for each subject not only for the students but also for the teachers (Klassen RM, 2010). Fear of not fully preparation of work provoke anxiety

among students (Mark S., et al., 2005). Those who are prepared earlier they have greater self-efficacy (Howey, 1999).

Achievements of good grades and competition: Cognitive learning promotes competition among students. Every student wants to go ahead from other ones by measuring his or her grades. They try to effort for every mark (Waddar MS, 2010). There is very tough competition has been seen among the students that are tolerable for the teachers (Boyatzis, Stubbs, & Taylor, 2002). Grades, Rewards, performance evaluation such as assessments and competition play the role of motivation. (Garcia, McKeachie, Pintrich, & Smith, 1991)

Exam's Fear: By showing its name "exam" everyone feels fear who is going to prepare exam. This phobia has been started from date has been announced for exam. Hard-worker students prepare early for this phase but some-how a minor fear of unseen paper and marking criteria. Fear of exam or less marks evaluation that affect student academic performance (Hambree, 1988). This phobia tends to divert student's less attention towards their diet and other

environment conditions some time it creates physical changes or body temperature, stomach ache, flue etc (Gretchen E. & Terry F., 2013). Students during exam showing their behaviour aggressively, rudely and loose temper. These students after the exam feel comfort with humble and pleasant behaviour.

In Pakistan the opportunities of higher education that meet from universities not found everywhere. Only the most populated and urban areas the universities are located. As same, In Balochistan, Universities are located Khuzdar, Bela, Loralai and Quetta. Mostly the students come from rural and suburban areas to these universities for getting graduate degrees. The students enter in that environment with new academic setting, faced with living in different society, culture and language system. The geographical detachment also separates the students from their family, relatives and friends and faced difficulties of making new homes and friends. Thus, Students must make to accommodate when they enter in graduate program. They faced the challenges of new customs, language, living arrangement, social life and much

more. The conditions for stress are abundant, and the possibilities of an unsatisfactory experience are great (Robert Perrucci, 1995).

Background of the Study: Traditional annual system has changed in semester system of education among the graduates of university students of Balochistan. In annual system students only memorize specific topics of course and at the end of year they give the exam received 60% or less or above this grade. But semester system turns to the students learn every topic of course which has taught during the semester. Students must regular for conducting assignments. Papers. Presentations and quizzes. Thus, academic workload burdened students and stress develop among the students. It has positive and negative impacts, Positive in the form of provide energy and learning for future wellbeing and negative in the form of suffering different physical health.

Focus of the Study: Study emphasises the students' stress due to academic workload and physical and psychological factors due to academic workload. For this purpose, the university Students of B.S, Master and M. Phil are undertaken.

OBJECTIVES

1. To examine feeling of Assessments & depression about grades among students.
2. To examine the stress due to academic workload among students.
3. To analyse physical & psychological factors due to academic workload among students.

HYPOTHESIS

1. Assessments correlated to depression about grades.
2. Higher the workload of studies higher will be the stress among students.
3. Physical & psychological factors correlated to academic workload among students.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

A Structured Questionnaire having multiple questions regarding personal information and response about stress and assessments conducted. The responses measured by correlation test analysis.

METHODS

Participants

A Survey has conducted from male & female university students from three

universities of Quetta, which were Balochistan University of Information Technology Engineering & Management Sciences, University of Balochistan and Sardar Bahdur Khan Women's University. Undergraduate Students of Master (M.A) and Bachelor of Science (B.S) & graduate students (M. Phil), 160 male and female, by Quota sampling from different faculties were selected for study. The demographic table has shown in (Table 1).

Total 160 university's students who filled the original questionnaire, the age range of students was 21-25 years old (M=1.74, Sd=0.59). They were engaged different study program like graduation (B.S & Master) & post-graduation (M.Phil.) and mostly engaged participant to B.S (M=1.28, Sd=0.48), in which the semester 3rd and 4th respectively greater than others one (M= 3.92, Sd= 1.81). Participant collected from Five Faculty, Faculty of basic science & arts (FABS), Faculty of management science (FMS), Faculty of information & computer technology (FICT), Faculty of Engineering (FOE) & Faculty of life science (FLS). However mostly participants collected from faculty of basic science and Arts (FABS) (M=

2.26, Sd= 1.54). Medium of instruction of students in college & university respectively (M= 1.35, Sd= 0.48) (M= 1.04, Sd= 0.19) is English. Mostly participant live (M= 1.23, Sd= 0.47) with their family.

MEASURES

The Distress factors analysis by three factors that are losing confidence (LC), under strain during exam (CS), Sleep disturbance (SB), academic workload factors are the Concentration towards studies (SC), Difficult to manage other activities (SA), While physical & psychological factors of study workload are analysed by pain which is associated with body pain, headache, stomach-ache (P), Tense (T), Stressful (S), Fever (F), Excited (E), Unhappy (UH). Pain & Fever are the physical factors while Tense, Stressful & Unhappy are the negative psychological factors and Excited is positive psychological factors of academic workload. Mostly students face these factors before giving or preparing assessments. These factors are measure by three items Likert scale.

ANALYSIS

Descriptive statics analysed by frequencies, percentage and means while

other variables are analysed by Pearson correlation and standard deviation.

RESULTS

Students' felt that assessments are difficult and not easy as they think its correlated to worry about less grades ($r=0.166$, $p=0.36$). while worry about less grades are negatively correlated to depression about less grades, more worry about grades they feel less depression about grades ($r=-0.264$, $p=0.001$) (**Table 2**).

Statistics showed that students feel under strain condition during exam ($M=3.61$, $Sd=1.19$) is less correlated but significant to the losing confidence among students due to academic workload ($r=0.185$, $p=0.019$) but strongly correlated to sleep disturbance ($r=0.353$, $p=0.000$). The sleep disturbance or lost sleep due to heavy academic work load also influence on the student's confidence ($r=0.232$, $p=0.010$) as well as sleep disturbance effected other student's activities. Study concentration affects on the other activities because of stress and positively correlated ($r=0.300$, $p=0.00$) (**Table 3**).

The university's assessments pressurizing students for study such as attempting Assignments, Quizzes,

Presentation and the students have to be forced to study. Some physical & Psychological factors are analysed before giving or attempting assessment. The pain (headache, stomach ache or body pain) negatively correlated to tense ($r=-0.328$, $p=0.00$), stress ($r=-0.349$, $p=0.00$) & excitement ($r=-0.321$, $p=0.00$) but positively correlated to fever and study concentration, more fever than more pain (headache, stomach ache or body pain) ($r=0.608$, $p=0.00$) & higher study concentration, higher will be pain etc. ($r=0.207$, $p=0.009$). Stress, fever, unhappy condition and study concentration high the tension will be less, found negatively correlation to tension among them but positively correlation to excitement ($r=-0.652$, $p=0.00$). More stress is significantly to less fever ($r=-0.520$, $p=0.00$) and unhappy ($r=-0.256$, $p=0.001$). Fever is negatively correlated to Excitement ($r=-0.479$, $p=0.00$) & losing confidence ($r=-0.238$, $p=0.002$) while they are unhappy ($r=0.497$, $p=0.00$) and study concentration ($r=0.267$, $p=0.001$) feel fever. They feel more excitement in happy mood ($r=-0.359$, $p=0.00$), less study concentration ($r=-0.194$, $p=0.014$) & manage their activities ($r=-0.255$, $p=0.001$). Students feel unhappy, they difficult to manage their activities ($r=0.238$, $p=0.002$) (**Table 4**).

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the respondents

Characteristics	Frequency N=160	Percentage%
Age of Respondents		
16-20	51	31.9%
21-25	103	64.4%
26-30	3	1.9%
Study Program		
B.S	117	73.1%
M.A/M.Sc./M.B.A	41	25.6%
Mphil/M.S	2	1.3%
Faculty		
FABS	89	55.6%
FMS	11	6.9%
FICT	2	1.3%
FOE	45	28.1%
FLS	13	8.1%
Medium of Instruction in College		
English	104	65.0%
Urdu	56	35.0%
Medium of Instruction in University		
English	154	96.3%
Urdu	6	3.8%
Living status		
With Family	126	78.8%
In hostel	31	19.4%
Relative's House	3	1.9%

Table 2: Correlation between Assessments & depression about grades

Variables	easy	Worry	Depression
Assessments are easy	1	.166*	-.050
		.036	.533
Worry about less grades		1	-.264**
			.001
Depression about less grades			1

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)
 **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 3: Correlation between Stress factors with burdened study workload

Variables	CS	LC	SB	SC	SA	M	Sd
Under strain during exam (CS)	1	.185*	.353**	.157*	.270**	3.61	1.19
Losing confidence (LC)		1	.203**	.048	.194*	2.73	1.40
sleep disturbance/ lost sleep (SB)			1	.758	.014	3.52	1.32
Study concentration (SC)				1	.300**	3.38	1.24
Unmanage other activities (SA)					1	3.56	1.29

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4: Correlation between Physical & Psychological factors heavy academic workload

Variables	T	S	F	E	UH	LC	CS	SC	SA
Pain	-.328**	-.349**	.608**	-.321**	.142	.017	.042	.207**	.099
	.000	.000	.000	.000	.073	.830	.599	.009	.212
Tense Stressful		-.444**	-.461**	.652**	-.342**	.153	-.023	-.226**	.001
		.000	.000	.000	.000	.054	.771	.004	.987
Fever			-.520**	-.115	-.256**	.094	.080	-.066	.022
			.000	.146	.001	.237	.315	.404	.787
Excited				-.479**	.497**	-.238**	-.032	.267**	-.063
				.000	.000	.002	.685	.001	.432
Unhappy					-.359**	-.036	-.039	-.194*	-.255**
					.000	.653	.625	.014	.001
Losing Confidence						-.118	-.116	-.076	.238**
						.137	.143	.339	.002
Under strain during exam							.148	.102	.165*
							.062	.199	.037
Concentrated towards studies								.173*	.207**
								.029	.009
Difficult to manage other activities									.220**
									.005

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

DISCUSSION

Graduation & post-graduation is very crucial time-period of learning. This is a time to produce new knowledge, information and other invention through different projects and research. The traditional learning of annual system is being changed in semester system and through-out the universities and colleges for graduation this system of examination is prevailed ((HEC), 2015) in Pakistan.

Assessments and depression about grades:

University students are forced by the teachers to prepare regular assessments (Chris, 2001) in the form of quizzes,

presentation, assignments, mid papers and the final papers. Self-studies more emphasizes than memorization and rattification which can obtain by observation, understanding and demonstration of concepts that provide deep learning to achieve success (Alf , Keithia, & & Ronald, 2002). Students are enforced to engage regular in their studies that's why it is difficult to organize other tasks of daily routine (Vivien S., Yeo Lay, Rebecca P., & Chong Wan, 2008), regular assessment helps in organizing academic tasks & getting more score in exam. Mostly students are worry and feel depression about the grades ($r=-0.264^{**}$) & feel

constantly strain in exam. It must be maintaining by relax marks evaluation (Hambree, 1988) for better academic performance.

Academic workload and Stress:

Academic work motivates the cognitive level of learning (Gretchen E. & Terry F., 2013), & students select the discipline by counselling, understanding, interest and professional aims. They help their teachers parents & elder siblings. Particularly the early phase of learning is very tough for these students (Choon, Choon, Rashidatul Aniyah, Rammiya, & Kelvin, 2015) in university to understand credit hours, grades (CGPA) & research projects. Study materials that are in the form of notes, outlines and lectures given to the students are difficult to understand, while 48% students feel projects are interesting & helpful for their competitive abilities, but 60% students sometime feel exhausted due to burdened study workload. They stressful about their studies and it caused sleeping problems ($r=0.353^{**}$) this affect difficult to manage other activities of students ($r=0.343^{**}$).

Physical & Psychological factors:

Physical & psychological complications such as Pain (headache, stomach-ache)

so that they cannot concentrate attentively on their specific learning that effects on their grades (Amir, Islam, & Ardita, 2015) findings also examined ($r= 0.207^{**}$), but more study concentrated students feel less tension ($r=-0.238^{**}$) & more fever ($r=0.267$). Study workload making students unhappy and affect their other activities of life ($r=0.238^{**}$) but less concentration of studies they become excited, feel less unhappy ($r=0.359^{**}$) & Student manage their activities, but more study concentration tends to students' attention studies that's why tension about studies will be less that enhancing the capabilities of learning. Although burdened should be less in starting semester to avoid dropouts and migration from one department to another department.

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