

# A Study Of Gender Difference In Stress Among University Students.

Suman Kumari (Research Scholar)

P.G. Dept. of Psychology, LNMU

Darbhangha (Bihar)

## **Abstract: -**

This study was aimed to investigate the differences between male and female students about their experience of stress. The transition of students from high schools to universities or colleges is a major experience in their lives. It accords them many opportunities for psychological developments and learning experiences. However, this transition also causes several stressful circumstances in their lives. University students were surveyed on how they typically respond when they are under stress. This study was conducted on a sample of 140 university students in which 70 respondents were males and remaining 70 respondents were females. The response was obtained using Singh Personal Stress Source Inventory. On the statistical analysis of the data, findings revealed that male students experienced more stress than female students. Findings were discussed in the light of previous researches.

\*Keywords – Stress, Psychological Development, Gender.

## **Introduction**

Stress is an important factor in the lives of university or college students. University students are a group that is particularly prone to stress due to the transitional nature of university life (Towbes and Cohen, 1996). Stress among university students has been a topic of interest for many researchers and teachers for several years because it affects physiological and psychological health as well as academic performance (Struthers et al., 2000; Gadzella, 2004; Misra et al., 2000). University students experience many stressors from different sources on their academic life. Due to difference in personality characteristics, they respond to those stressors differently. According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), stress as a pattern of negative physiological responses occurring in situations where people perceive threats to their well-being which they may be unable to meet.

Students reported their experience of high academic stress at a predictable time in each semester which results from preparing and taking an exam, class ranking competition, and mastering huge amount of syllabus in a comparatively very small amount of time (Rawson, Bloomer, & Kendalla, 1999). Institutional university level stressor is overcrowded lecture halls, (Ongori, 2007; Awino and Agolla, 2008), semester system, and inadequate resources to perform academic work.

Academic stress among students have long been researched on, and researchers have identified stressors as too many assignments, competition with other students, failures, lack of pocket money (Fairbrother and Warn, 2003), poor relationship with other students or lecturers, family or problems at home. There are many challenges faced by college students in their endeavour for educational excellence. When such challenges are perceived negatively, there can be an adverse impact on their motivation and performance (Ames, 1992; Amirkhan, 1998; Covington, 1993; Perry, 1991; Weiner, 1979). After all, prolonged and unmanageable perceived stress leads to helplessness (Abramson, Garber, and Seligman, 1980; Sedek and Kofta, 1990), depression (Peterson and Barrett, 1987) and burnout (Carver and Scheier, 1994; Folkman and Lazarus, 1985), which finally sabotage the academic future of some students. Whereas, some students have the competency to endure such negative academic experiences, overcome minor setbacks and finally bounce back from negative challenging events producing outstanding results (e.g., Dweck and Leggett, 1988; Perry and Magnusson, 1989; Struthers and Perry, 1996).

Research on stress along gender lines is a fascinating worthily because there is a great disparity in the stress of female and male, which is illustrated in several studies. Therefore, this study tries to show more attitude about the difference in the effects of stress on male and female students. Psychologists have long been noted that stress affects men and women differently. Women tend to seek out social support, while men are more likely to withdraw. Researchers report that a stress receptor in the brain regulates metabolic responses to the stressful situation differently in male and female. The stress associated with gender role identification is different for each sex because women are more likely to identify with the feminine gender role, and men are

more likely to identify with the masculine gender role. Sitzand Poche (2006) found out that women displayed more optimism than men and have a lower level of perceived stress compared to men. Eisler has suggested that men are affected more greatly than women it comes to adhering to societal gender norms and can lead to anger and poor health decision. It has further been concluded that male stress has a relationship to variation in aggression and violence. For women, gender role stress has been linked to body image issues as well as an eating disorder. Researchers from UCLA analyzed data from hundreds of biological and behavioural studies (both human and animal), they concluded that females were more likely to deal with stress by "tending and befriending"- - that is, nurturing those around them and reaching out of others men, on the other hand, were more likely to sequester themselves or initiate a confirmation, behaviour in line, with the "fight or flight response that's long been associated with stress.

Brougham et al. (2009) conducted a study to assess the stress, sex differences, and coping strategies of college students. These researchers also tested undergraduate students attending college in the United States. This study revealed that female college students reported feeling a large amount of stress than college. According to Chen, Wong, Ran and Gilson (2009), male students reported higher levels of stress worse psychological well-being and having fewer inclinations towards using positive coping strategies. Calagus (2011) claimed that the significant difference between the female and male students is because of their view of the subject, lectures, academic program, classroom their attitude towards the stressor. Pourrajab et al., and Zamirullah et al., revealed that male students are much more stressor than female students. Akhtar (2011) reported in a study both boys and girls differed significantly in the experience of stress. Girls experienced more stress as compared to boys. These findings may be due to girls are more thought oriented. They possess an emotional approach in dealing with the matters, while boys are more action-oriented. Almedia & Kessler, 1998; Nolen-Hoekseman et al., 1999; Stein & Nyamathi, 1999; Turner et al. 1995) found that women reported more stress than men when taking into account the estimates of stress exposure, the enduring nature of some role-related stressor and other long-term chronic and daily stressors. In an advanced educational organization such as university (Smith, Johal, Wadsworth, Smith & Peters, 2000) where the load placed on students is based on the time limit and difficulty to stand out in tests or examinations, students are prone to experience stress.

The research findings about the experience of stress in rural and urban students regardless of gender reveal a contradictory picture in this regard. Devi (2011) found that rural students proved themselves better than the urban students on social, educational and total adjustment. Bigbee (1987) assessed the levels and types of stressful life events among rural versus urban women (n = 157). Rural women tended to report environmentally related stressors more frequently than urban women, while urban women reported more financially related stressors. The findings suggest that the levels of stress among rural and urban women are comparable, but the types of stressors experienced may vary.

### **Hypothesis: -**

1. There would be a significant difference between gender on the level of stress on university students
2. There would be a significant difference between rural and urban students on the experience of stress.

### **Method**

#### **Sample: -**

The sample consisted of 140 university students studying in postgraduate classes in L.M.N.U. Darbhanga. Out of which 70 were male and 70 were female. The sample selection was based on purposive sampling technique.

#### **Tools: -**

1. **Singh Personal Stress Source Inventory (SPSSI)** - This inventory has been developed by Singh and Singh. This is a comparatively new standardized inventory (Hindi Version) to measure the stress. It has 35 items and three response alternatives to each items. Scores range 35 to 105, and a high score indicates a high degree of stress. Its reliability is  $r = .79$ .

**Result and Discussion: -**

The analysis of the obtained data was done with the help of t-test. Obtained t- ratio is present in the table.

**Table – 1****Level of the stress of male and female students.**

The table -1 shows the mean and SD for the level of stress of male and female students. From the table, it can be seen that the mean and SD of male students are 48.48 and 8.155 and the mean and SD of female students are 43.3 and 6.538 respectively.

Group	N	Mean	SD	t-ratio
Boys	70	48.48	8.155	4.13
Girls	70	43.3	6.538	

The obtained t-ratio is 4.13 which is significant at .01 level. The findings reflect the notion that male students experience more stress than female students. These findings are consistent with previous studies, which revealed that male reported a higher level of stress than female (Gilson,2009). Vijaya and Karunakaran (2013) also found in their study that the majority of boys had expressed a high level of stress and moderate stress compared to girls. Nielsen et al (2008) reported that in men higher levels of stress were associated with mortality, whereas in females there was no associated between perceived stress and mortality indicating that stress is perceived differently by females and males.

**Table -2****level of stress of urban and rural students**

Group	N	Mean	SD	t-ratio
Urban	66	50.68	6.319	5.097
Rural	74	45.47	5.615	

Table-2 shows that there is a significant difference between urban and rural students according to stress. The mean and SD score of students in an urban area is 50.68 and 6.319. On the other hand, the mean and SD score of students in the rural area is 45.47 and 5.615. The obtained t-ratio is 5.09 which is significant at .01 level. The findings show that urban students experience more stress than rural students.

The stress scores higher on the urban population reflects the view that rural students still experience lesser stress in comparison to urban students. The reason behind it is that rural society is by and large homogenous in nature. Rural people are close to each other and interact frequently. They share and solve their problems collectively. The other important reason is of low stress is rural people have still less competitiveness and lower level of aspiration. The competition among students are very low in comparison to their urban counterpart's academic life. In urban society, throat cut competition compelled them to be competitive which ultimately propelled a large amount of stress.

The result is similar to the result of Vijayalakshmi and Lavanya (2006) which revealed that urban students experience more stress than their rural counterparts. Urban parents have high expectations of their children in studies. To fulfil their expectations, adolescent always remains in pressure and stress. Therefore, the peer pressure, the competitive environment in the school, the busy work schedule of parents, demands of teachers for good grades create more stressful situations to the urban adolescents than rural.

**Conclusion**

This study reveals two important findings: a. the gender difference is seen in the perception of stress and reactions to the stressor and, b. rural and urban students respond differently to the stressful situation. It may be concluded on the basis of above findings that, there is an urgent need to develop conducive academic culture, so that stress may be minimised irrespective of gender and locality. Further, family members and parents may play important role to minimise the level of experience by extending support at every hook and corner. It is here to be mentioned that some amount of stress is essential to prepare them competitive.

**Reference:**

1. Anbumalar C., DorathyAgines P., Jaswanti V. P., Priya D., Reniangelin D. (2017). Gender Difference in Perceived Stress Levels and Coping Strategies among College Students. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 4 (4).
2. Bhargava, D., Trivedi, H. (2018). A Study of Causes of Stress Management among Youth. *IRA – International Journal of Management & Social Sciences*, 11(3), 108 – 117.
3. Bulo, J.G. & M.G. Sanchez (2014). Sources among College Students *CCVIT Research Journal* .1 (1) ,16-25 .
4. Essay, U. K.(2018). Three way psychologists have defined stress. Retrieve from – <https://www.ukessay.com/eassays/psychology/analyzing-three-way-psychologists-havedefined-stress-psychology-essay.php?verf=1>
5. Eller, D.- Stress and Gender. Retrieved from – <https://www.webmd.com/women/features/stress-gender>
6. Hamaidh, Shafer H.(2010).Gender differences in stress and reactions to stressor among Jordanian university students.*International Journal of Social Psychiatry*, 58 (1),26-63
7. Kania, Stephanie K. (2014) “The Relationship Between Gender Differences and Stress,” *The Huron University College Journal of Learning and Motivation: Vol 52: Iss.1, Article 7.*
8. Khan, Z., Lanin, A.B., Ahmad, N. (2015).The Level of Stress in Male and Female School Students. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 6 (6).
9. Khan, M.J., Altaf, S. And Kausar, H. (2013).Effect of Perceived Academic Stress on Students’ Performance. *FWU Journal of Social Sciences*, Winter, 7 (2), 146-151.
10. Kadapatti, Manjula G. And A.H.M. Vijayalaxmi. (2012).The stress of Academic Stress -A Study onPre-UniversityStudents. *Indian J. Science. Res.* 3 (1), 171-175.
11. Mckeand, R.(2016). Gender and Stress: How Men and Women Experience Stress Differently. Retrieved from -<https://miscmagazine.com/gender-and-stress/>
12. Matud, M.P. (2004). Gender difference in stress and coping style. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 37, 1401-1415.
13. Misigo, B.L. (2015). Gender difference in the perceived level of stress and coping strategies among university students in Kenya: A case of public universities. *International Academic Journal of Social Sciences and Education*, 1 (4), 44-52.
14. Nielsen, N.R., Kristen, T.S., Sohnohr, P., &Gronbeck (2008). Perceived stress and causes specific mortality among men and women: Results from a prospective cohort study. *American Journal of Epidemiology*, 168 (5), 481-491 NJ: Prentice-Hall.
15. Pourrajab, M., Rabbani, M., KasmaienezhadFard, S.(2004). Different Effects of Stress on Male and Female Students. *The Online Journal of Counseling and Education*, 3 (3), 31-39.
16. Singh, S. K. (2014).A Study of Level of Stress among School Students in term to their Gender.*Indian Social and Psychological Studies*, 7 (1),13-16.
17. Srivastava S., Singh J.P., Srivastava, O.P. (2014). Stress and Coping Stylg of Urban and Rural Adolescents. *International Jornal of Kchrical Research and Application*, 2(5), 217-220