THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL STUDIES

The Association between Stress Level of Undergraduates and Different Variables in Sri Lanka: With Reference to University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Sri Lanka

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Abstract:
Stress is a common eventual emotional feeling which varies from the youngest to the eldest worldwide and any person engaged in any profession can face stress. In Sri Lankan context, students' stress is an unpreventable phenomenon which is seen in their lives often. This study attempts to identify the latent factors on the undergraduates' stress since not many researches had been conducted on this regard so far in Sri Lankan context. A well-structured questionnaire was administered to a sample of 384 third year undergraduates in the academic year of 2014/2015 from four faculties: Humanities and Social Sciences (FHSS), Management Studies and Commerce (FMSC), Applied Sciences (FAS), Medical Sciences (FMS) in the University of Sri Jayewardenepura using stratified random sampling and systematic random sampling techniques. The results highlight that the chi-square analysis for two-way categorical data, confirmed that level of undergraduates' stress was significantly influenced by family related and personal variables .Improving the existing counselling and introducing a unit course regarding this can be recommended.

Keywords: Stress, undergraduates, chi-square analysis, academic, personal

1. Introduction

Stress is a common sensation which could start due to feelings and reactions to a certain situation. Because of its importance, World Health Organization has named stress as the "health epidemic of the 21st century" (Fink, 2016). Stress is a sensation of emotional or physical tension and body to take different attitudes in life. Though we think stress affects solitary the mind, it affects the entire body. It enhances a person's capability to accomplish under pressure. This applies to all the systems of our body.

The combination of the external and internal reactions surpasses the individual's resources to cope up with their condition and that is where stress arises. People move further away from themselves and turn out to be more stressed because of the lack of time for a break, which ultimately leads to psychological health complications such as depression and anxiety as well as physical health problems such as high blood pressure, gastritis and etc.

Any person who engaged in any profession in anyplace can sense stress since it is a common influence for humans worldwide and it befalls unpredictably and eventually. Simply, stress generates to any human being including from youngest to the eldest. Universally researchers analyze stress due to money, self-pressure, worries and lack of sleep. Work place for an employee also may generate stress. Employees become stressed due to their working conditions such as poor maintenances of the workplace, excessive noise, faulty equipment, lack of kindness and understanding. Not only the working conditions but also the personal factors generate stress. Families too could cause stress under personal factors. Holmes & Rahe (1967) stated according to the Social Readjustment Rating Scale, family problems may occur due to the marital problems, problems with children, death of a spouse and pregnancy.

Globally stress is common not only among the working community, but also among the undergraduates. Mental health of children is a trending topic nowadays. Psychological Distress Inventory indicates that five points faced by college female students, cause stress among them. It consists of financial problems, inability to face failures, being rejected by someone, pressure of test fear and relationship break-ups (Jennifer, 2001). Stress among undergraduate as well as graduate students can be classified as multifactorial. Academic and non-academic dynamics, such as environmental, psychological and socioeconomic attributes can also give rise to stress (Brand & Schoonheim-Kleim, 2009).

Over the last few decades, the stress level among students seems to have increased significantly. Competition among themselves to gain access to national schools, universities in Sri Lanka might have contributed to this. Therefore, in Sri Lankan context, students' stress is an unavoidable phenomenon which is often observed in their lives.

Several reasons can be considered, which can give rise to stress. The intense competition to obtain access to government universities, high expectations to follow professional courses due to the prestige and employment opportunities, low

socio-economic status of the students, inability to follow desired fields, and also overcrowding in the government universities.

Previous researchers have analyzed several sources which might have attributed to stress among students. Various variables such as demographic, academic, personal, environmental and relationship were some of them. Studies carried out related to this topic aren't commonly found in Sri Lanka. But it is considered a frequent topic globally. Here the researcher has decided to discourse about the association between stress level of undergraduates and different variables: demographic variables, stress related variables in Sri Lanka because, previously less has been written regarding this topic, as mentioned earlier.

Furthermore, researcher thought to educate people on this regard, so that they can absorb whatsoever people think is good for them. Moreover, the relationship between stress level and various variables were analyzed by various researchers. But they have given more weight to the students who study either medicine or dentistry.

Therefore, the researcher has decided to fill that gap by including the faculties of Management, Applied Science and Humanities and Social Sciences apart from Medical faculty. The suicidal rate among undergraduates is found to have increased in the recent decades (Fazlulhaq, 2013), which could be either due to the academic, personal, environmental or any other factors. Therefore, the relationship between stress level and above-mentioned factors are quite very important to study.

Moreover, study of relationships is one of the most important aspects, because stress is a natural phenomenon in any human being. Therefore, this research mainly focused on to identify the association between different variables: demographic variables, stress related variables and stress level of undergraduates.

In order to find a solution for the above identified problems, a clear-cut objective would be much more favorable. Accordingly, the identified objective for the study would be to identify the association between stress level of undergraduates and different variables: demographic variables, stress related variables.

Several factors which could limit the precision and the scope of the study could be there. Sampling method and analytical methods which the researcher has planned to use might have contributed to this.

According to that the researcher selected only the association between stress level of undergraduates and different variables: demographic variables, stress related variables. Therefore, the association between stress level of undergraduates and different factorson other three faculties and other universities of Sri Lanka, stress management, physical and mental illnesses occurred due to the stress, the impact of stress on other professions etc. are about to missed. Moreover, another limitation was that the researcher selected only the University of Sri Jayewardenepura out of the 15 state universities of Sri Lanka. Also, the researcher selected only four faculties out of seven faculties of the University of Sri Jayewardenepura therefore the study is focused on a limited area. Another limitation was that only third year students were selected from each faculty.

2. Literature Review

There can be identified different factors which influence for the stress under empirical studies globally. Demographic, personal, academic, environmental, family matters are some of the factors which were identified universally by the previous researchers. These factors have been discussed briefly as follows.

2.1. Relationship between Demographic Factors and Stress

Some of the dimensions which the previous researchers had studied under the demographic factors are age, gender, education and occupation. According to them, there can be identified a relationship between demographic factors and stress in different perceptions.

Reddy & Ramamurthy (1991) were analyzed the influence of age on stress experience of a person.According to that the sample consisted of 200 executives and results revealed that the executives in the age group of 41-50 experienced more stress comparative to the age group of 51-60 due to their responsibilities.

Another demographic characteristic is gender and many researchers had studied the relationship between gender and stress. Most of the studies have finalized that the female party has more stress comparative to the males.Stress that notice is mostly among females, younger students, without a previous higher education qualification, and those who are not satisfied with their decision to study dentistry compared to their counterparts (Morse & Dravo, 2007); (Pau, et al., 2007).

When considered the occupation, Ryhal & Singh, (1996) examined the correlates of job stress among university faculty. Sample consisted of 100 faculty members 30 professors, 31 associate and 39 assistant professors. Assistant professors experienced higher job stress than associate professors and professors according to the revealed results. According to the study of "Occupational Stress among Working Women" done by Shoor (2017) occupational stress has increased among working women with the incensement of the activities they have. The study tends to find occupational stress among working women in Ludhiana city of Punjab, keeping in mind the variations in age by using Likert type five-point scale, chi-square, one-way ANOVA, mean and variances.

2.2. Relationship between Environmental Factors and Stress

Sudden change of the environment that a person lived so far could be another problem to occur stress. Many students go through substantial stress due to the anxieties associated with the change. A person could experience a loss of control over the new environment due to the stressful factors like change and transition (Fisher, 1994).

2.3. Relationship between Family Related Factors and Stress

Researchers have studied the dimensions like parental education, family size and parental support under family related factors. They are given below. Therefore, it can be identified the relationship between family related factors and stress in different perceptions.

Pandey & Srivastava (2000) had studied the female personnel working in railway, bank and teaching institutions. The respondents belonging to nuclear family had expressed more interpersonal work stress according to the revealed results. Simply it can be concluded that there is an association between the family size and the stress level. Parental support influence for the stress either in positive or negative manner. The social support from the family, coworkers, supervisors and other people could minimize stress among the employees (Vashishtha & Mishra, 1998).

2.4. Relationship between Personal Factors and Stress

Many researchers have studied the relationship between personal factors and stress in multidimensional angels because stress occurs in the both physical and mental body of a human. They can be given as follows.
The strains experienced and coping strategies was examined Abrol (1990) by using a sample size of 54 teachers (27 males, 27 females). According to the discovered results the subjects reported psychological and interpersonal stress. They used Social support was the main factor which they were used to deal with stress. According to him stress can reduce with the help of relationships. From the above studies it can be concluded that the relationships either increase or decrease stress in various ways.

2.5. Relationship between Academic Factors and Stress

Some of the academic related factors which are very common for students are exam pressure, time and work load. Each of these dimensions which comes under the academic factor has a relationship with stress in some way. It could be either optimistic or pessimistic.

Mental health illnesses can cause mostly to the undergraduates negatively and including academic stress (Kaur D. , 2012). The perceived sources of stress among dental students are fear of course failure, overload of work, difficulties in the clinical training and fear and unitability of the future (Acharya, 2003); (Polychronopoulou & Divaris , 2005).
According to Abouserie (1994), At each semester many students suffer from stress due to the exams, lack of time to cover the syllabus and struggle for a grade in the exam. According to the above studies done by various researchers it can be concluded that there are different factors which influence stress among undergraduates and the relationship between these factors and the level of stress is either positive or negative. Considering all these facts researcher has planned to categorize different factors which influence stress as academic factors, environmental factors, family related factors, demographic factors and personal factors. ANOVA, one sample t-test, regression analysis, chi-square analysis is some of the methods which were used by the researchers in their studies in various ways.

3. Research Methodology

Under the methodology the researcher has given the target population as all the undergraduates in the University of Sri Jayewardenepura. All the third-year undergraduates who are studying in the faculties of Humanities and Social Sciences, Management Studies and Commerce, Applied Sciences and Medical Sciences of the University of Sri Jayewardenepura is assumed to me the sampled population.

A third year undergraduate (academic year 2014/2015) from the selected faculties is assumed to be the sampling unit. Also, it is considered as the response unit as well as the reporting unit.
The highest student intake was the main reason of selecting the University of Sri Jayewardenepura. Reason to select only four out of seven faculties was because, they are well known and the long history compared to the other three faculties and the subjects in these faculties are included in the A/L stream as well. Reason to select only the third-year undergraduates was because they have much knowledge and plenty of experiences about the university lifestyle and they are adapted to the environment of the university compared to the first and second-year students because they are already matured type of people. Also, their degree program consists of general and special. Fourth year students are not relevant because of their internship.

The student population in the third year in the academic year of 2014/2015 among four faculties according to the data from the Administration department of the university can be given as below table.

Faculties	Selected Student Population	Proportional Allocation
Humanities and Social Sciences	887	$\frac{887}{2923} \times 400 = 121$
Management Studies and Commerce	1219	$\frac{1219}{2923} \times 400 = 167$
Applied Sciences	667	$\frac{667}{2923} \times 400 = 91$
Medical Sciences	150	$\frac{150}{2923} \times 400 = 21$
Total	2923	400

Table 1: Third Year Student Population – Academic Year 2014/2015
Source: Administration Department, University of Sri Jayewardenepura (2018)

According to the book of "Research methods for business students" in the 95% confidence level, the sample size can be taken as 357 (Saunders , Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009). The researcher has decided the sample size as 400 to get a better output by making it a round figure by increasing the sample size.

The main method of sampling was stratified random sampling technique and to select individuals from each stratum, the researcher has used systematic random sampling technique. A structured questionnaire was prepared as the tool of collecting data by reviewing the relevant literature and in accordance with the objective. A brief introduction and purpose of conducting this study had been attached at the beginning as the layout of the questionnaire. To avoid language barriers and to get the answers more accurately and conveniently the researcher has used both English and Sinhala languages to prepare the questionnaire.

Independent and the dependent variables of the study were identified and according to that the stress of undergraduates is the dependent variable, while the independent variables are demographic factors, personal factors, family related factors, academic factors and environmental factors.

Out of the 400 sample, only 384 were responding and the study was carried out by considering the 384 sample.

To identify the association between stress level of undergraduates and different variables: demographic variables, stress related variables, a sample size of 384 third year undergraduates in the academic year of 2014/2015 of four faculties: Humanities and Social Sciences, Management Studies and Commerce, Applied Sciences, Medical Sciences in the University of Sri Jayewardenepura were used.

To check the association between variables, the researcher has used chi square analysis. Chi-square analysis which was introduced by the statistician Karl Pearson is a widely used analytical method in statistics. This is a special method which can be used to asses, if the sample obtained based on probability or any other method, is on a theoretical distribution or not.

Method of chi-square analysis was used to identify the association between stress level of undergraduates and different variables: demographic variables, stress related variables and data was analyzed using the methods of Minitab and SPSS software packages.

4. Results and Findings

Out of the 400 sample, only 384 were responding indicating the response rate was 96%. In fact, Fowler (2002), has sugested according to the Office of Management and Budget of the [U.S.] federal government, generally asks that procedures be likely to yield a response rate in excess of 75%. Table 4.1 indicates the distribution of responses among four faculties of the University of Sri Jayewardenepura.

Faculty	Distributed	Received	Response Rate
Humanities and Social Sciences	121	121	100%
Management Studies and Commerce	167	162	97.01%
Applied Sciences	91	80	87.91%
Medical Sciences	21	21	100%
Total	400	384	96%

Table 2: Distribution of Response Rate among the Four Facultties
Source: Sample Survey (2018)

According to the Table 4.1, the response rate varies in the range of 100% (faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, faculty of Medical Sciences) to 87.91% (faculty of Applied Sciences). The lowest response can be identified from the faculty of Applied Sciences.

4.1. Association between Stress Level And Demographic Variables

The researcher has constructed a chi square analysis to identify the association between stress level of undergraduates and different variables: demographic variables, stress related factors. The level of stress had a five-point scale such as "Not at All", "Rarely", "Sometime", "Often" and "Very Often" with scoring as 1,2,3,4 and 5 respectively. By considering that the chi-square analysis was done.

Only three faculties were chosen here to do the chi-square analysis since the sampling size was not adequate in the faculty of Medical Sciences and that can be given as a limitation too.

In this section researcher has discussed how the demographic variables are significantly associated with the stress level with respect to each faculty. The demographic variables which the researcher has discussed commonly are age, gender, family size, family type, "come from home".

But some of the demographic variables such as race, religion, marital status had been discussed only in relevant faculties. As an example, marital status has been discussed only in Humanities and Social Sciences and Management Studies and Commerce faculties since married undergraduates can be found only from those relevant faculties. Also, the variables like race, religion has been discussed only in Applied Sciences and Management Studies and Commerce faculties since diversity among race and religion can be identified only in those relevant faculties.

The demographic variables which has a significant association with stress level can be given as below.

Demographic Variables	Faculty	χ² value	p value	df	Decision
Age	FMSC	15.993	0.042	8	There is a significant association between stress level and age
Family size	FHSS	26.948	0.008	12	There is a significant association between stress level and family size
	FMSC	44.359	0.000		
Family type	FHSS	11.126	0.025	4	There is a significant association between stress level and family type
Come from home	FMSC	19.117	0.001	4	There is a significant association between stress level and come from home

Table 3: Frequency Table for the Significant Demographic Variables and Stress Level
Source: Sample Survey (2018)

According to the table 3, the undergraduates in FMSC has a significant association between stress level and age. According to that,the age category of 22-23 has a "often" stress level (31.6%), while 24-25 (44.9%) and ≤26 (50%) categories belong to the "sometime" sytess level. It implies that there is high stress level in the age category of 22-23 camparative to the other ages in FMSC undergraduates.

When consideredthe family size in FHSS, "often" level of stress can be found from ony 4 category and all the categories of family size in FMSC belong to the "sometime" level of stress and it is only 3 (66.7%) , only 4(27.6%), only 5 (42.4%) and more than 5 (42.9%) respectively.Nuclear family had expressed more interpersonal work stress according to the literature review. But in here both nuclear (29%) and extended (42.9%) families have a "rare" stress level. It implies that family type may involve to reduce stress among FHSS undergraduates.

When considered the "come from home" in FMSC, "sometime" level of stress can be found from both who come (52.1%) and who don't come (29.8%) from home. It implies that both parties have a medium level of stress.

Demographic Variables	Faculty	χ² value	p value	df	Decision
Gender	FHSS	1.880	0.758	4	There is no significant association between stress level and gender
	FMSC	5.609	0.230		
	FAS	3.778	0.437		
Age	FHSS	2.148	0.976	8	There is no significant association between stress level and age
	FAS	5.849	0.211	4	
Marital status	FHSS	2.335	0.674	4	There is no significant association between stress level and marital status
	FMSC	3.661	0.454		
Come from home	FHSS	4.359	0.360	4	There is no significant association between stress level and come from home
	FAS	0.955	0.917		
Family type	FMSC	7.171	0.127	4	There is no significant association between stress level and family type
	FAS	2.903	0.574		
Family size	FAS	9.935	0.622	12	There is no significant association between stress level and family size
Race	FMSC	15.973	0.192	12	There is no significant association between stress level and race
	FAS	11.942	0.450		
Religion	FMSC	15.973	0.192	12	There is no significant association between stress level and religion
	FAS	11.942	0.450		

Table 4: Frequency Table for the Insignificant Demographic Variables and Stress Level
Source: Sample Survey (2018)

According to the table 4, almost all demographic variables are insignificant and it implies that the factors like age, gender has no any association with stress though they have a significant association with stress level according to the literature review. Also, it shows that marital status, race and religion do not make any interaction with the stress level.
The researcher has checked the chi-square analysis seperately only for the demographic variables and the stress level in each of the faculties and the results have been interpreted by the researcher from above. After checking the association between the demographic variables with each of the faculties researcher has done another chi-square analysis. According to that the association between the different variables and the level of stress has been checked.
First the chi-square analysis has done for each of the faculty. The researcher has constructed the association between the different variables and the overall level of stress since the chi-square analysis cannot be done for the faculty of Medical Sciences. The results and the interpretations for that analysis can be given below.

4.2. Association between Different Variables and Stress Level among Undergraduates

In this section researcher has discussed how the different variables are significantly associated with the stress level with respect to each faculty and overall. There are 42 statements in the Likert scale and those statements were identified by studying the literature review.

According to the literature review which were studied, several variables which influence the stress were identified and they are "personal variables", "environmental variables", "academic variables" and "family related variables". The statements which relate to these factors were included in the questionnaire. Based on that, the researcher has constructed a chi-square analysis for these four factors faculty wise as well as overall by considering the reliability and the validity. Chi-Square analysis has been done separately for each faculty except for the faculty of Medical Sciences since the sampling size is not adequate there.

The above-mentioned variables are based upon a five-point scale such as "Strongly Disagree", "Disagree", "Neutral", "Agree" and "Strongly Agree" with scoring as 1,2,3,4 and 5 respectively. The five-point scale has merged into three-point scale such as "Disagree", "Neutral" and "Agree" with scoring as 1,2 and 3 respectively.

The results of the chi square analysis for the variables which has a significant association with overall stress level and as well as the stress level in each faculty can be given as below.

Variables	Faculty	χ^2 value	p value	df	Decision
Personal variables	FHSS	36.069	0.000	8	There is a significant association between stress level and personal variables
	FMSC	21.318	0.006		
	Overall	21.846	0.005	8	There is a significant association between overall stress level and personal variables
Environmental variables	FHSS	16.147	0.040	8	There is a significant association between stress level and environmental variables
	FMSC	21.016	0.007		
Family related variables	FMSC	29.904	0.000	8	There is a significant association between stress level and family related variables
	Overall	16.442	.036	8	There is a significant association between overall stress level and family related variables

Table 5: Frequency Table for the Significant Variables and Overall Stress Level / Stress Level Faculty Wise
Source: Sample Survey (2018)

According to the table 5, a significant association with overall stress level can be found only in "personal" and "family" related variables and it implies that the previously mentioned factors affect for the stress negatively or positively in all four faculties. Therefore, chi-square analysis for 2-way categorical data, confirmed that level of undergraduates' stress was significantly influenced by family related and personal variables.

When considered the stress level separately, undergraduates in FHSS disagreed to having personal variables, only 40.9% stress level in "sometime". Undergraduates in FMSC agreed to having personalvariables,46.2% stress level in "sometimes" while those disagreed to having personalvariables, only 35.6% stress level in "sometimes".

Undergraduates in FHSS agreed to having envionmental variables, 66.7% stress level is in "rarely" while among those disagreed to having envionmental variables while undergraduates in FMSC agreed to having envionmental variables, 56.3% stress level in "sometimes" while among those disagreed to having envionmental variables.

Undergraduates in FMSC agreed to having family related variables, 32.5% stress level in "sometimes" while those disagreed to having family related variables.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Association between the stress level and demographic variables among each faculty was done only for 3 faculties except medical faculty, which cannot be included due to inadequate sample size.

There is no association between the level of stress and several demographic variables like gender, race, religion and marital status in any faculty. It implies that the above are not influential variables causing stress among undergraduates. When the gender is considered, majority of the responders are females, which might be the reason behind for not having an association with stress. When considering race and religion, a diversity is seen only among two faculties which might the cause for not having any association with stress. Minority of married undergraduates could be the reason behind marital status not having any association with stress.

An association between age and stress level can be found only in the faculty of Management, which is highest in the age groups of 22-23 years, which implies that stress is more common in the young. Also, a significant association between "come from home" and stress level can be found only in the faculty of Management which implies that home environment must have played a major role in their stress level. Moreover, there is a significant association between family size and stress level only in the faculties of Humanities and Social Sciences and Management.

- There is an association between family type and stress level only in the faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences.
- There is no association between stress level and Academic variables in any of the faculties.
- There is an association between stress level and the personal variables only in the faculties of Humanities and Social Sciences and Management and overall faculties, which implies that personal variables like lack of social contacts, roommate conflicts, health problems etc. may result in increase or decrease in the stress level.

There is an association between stress level and environmental variables only in the faculties of Humanities and Social Sciences and Management, which implies that environmental variables like, staying out of home town, suffering due to the climatic changes and noisy environment etc. may result in increase or decrease in the stress level.

There is an association between stress level and family related variables only in the faculties of Management and overall faculties, which implies that family related factors like, parents lacking knowledge, suffering due to the death of parents and negative relationship with them etc. may result in increase or decrease in the stress level.

Improving the existing counselling service in the university premises, while raising awareness among students regarding these services and introducing a unit course regarding this can be recommended.

6. Acknowledgement

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