

Dimensions Of Stress Amongst Students Of Various Professional Courses-A Questionnaire Based Study

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Abstract:

Aim:

The aim of this study is to evaluate the stress levels and its effects during the course of study and prior to examinations among the students from professional colleges.

Materials and methods:

This study was undertaken in Saveetha university, Chennai among the courses-Engineering, Medicine, Dentistry, Law and MBA. A questionnaire was framed and was given to the students belonging to various departments and were asked to fill the form. 300 participants for the survey were randomly selected from various departments in the university.

Background:

Stress is a reaction to stimulus that disturbs our physical or mental equilibrium causing hormones such as adrenaline and cortisol to surge through the body. Stress that is left unchecked can contribute to health problems such as high BP, heart disease, obesity, mental depression and even suicidal tendency. Analysing existing literature reveals that medical students experience more stress than other professional college students. Academic factor is one of the most important stress inducing factor among professional college students. Similarly, students living in hostel are also prone to high stress levels.

Result:

300 students were taken for this study. 60% were males and 40% participants were females. Students studying MBBS AND BDS suffer from high level stress. MBBS students suffer from family problems. Law students tend to have overeating habits because of stress. Academics and peer pressure is the most common factor leading to stress. Anxiety is seen in MBA students and depression is common in medical and dental students. Most of the engineering students relieve stress by spending time in Internet. MBBS and BDS students prefer sleeping to relieve stress.

Conclusion:

From this study, we come to a conclusion that stress is not permanent and hence a stress management protocol should be created in order to create an emotionally balanced environment for the students which will enhance their performance and interest levels and proper counselling should be given.

Keywords: Stress, professional colleges, courses, academics, levels.

INTRODUCTION:

Stress is defined as non specific response to a demand-a product of change^[1]. Stress occurs in a situation (good or bad) which causes you to readjust. The term stress describes external demands (physical or mental) on an individual's physical and psychological well being^[2]. It has been shown that students are subjected to psychological problems due to demands of their education^[3]. Medical students have to face life threatening conditions in addition to heavy workload, more working hours and intense theoretical education.^[4] Dental students need to be trained in both theoretical and surgical aspects of dental care, including performing treatment on patients to qualify as dental professionals. Their preclinical work shows the level of stress in them. They are in a situation to complete their work in time as well as learning.^[5]

Other professional courses like engineering, MBA and law students will have stress because of academic load, fear of employment after graduation, lack of confidence etc. Anxiety, depression, fear about future, academics and peer pressure are some of the stress factors taken into account.

The general characteristics of a person in distress are: being over-aroused; tense or unable to relax; touchy, easily upset or irritable; easily startled or fidgety, and demonstrating intolerance of any interruption or delay. Stress can also be

associated with the number of examinations and the monetary status and surroundings of the students. Few studies have been conducted in India to determine the levels of stress among professional courses. However analysis of stress in all aspects of professional courses is lacking. Hence this study was undertaken to fill the void and determine the stress dimensions among medical, dental, engineering, management and law students to help them overcome the stress.

MATERIALS AND METHODS:

This study was undertaken in a private college and included students pursuing Engineering, Medicine, Dentistry, Law and MBA. A questionnaire was framed and was given to the students belonging to various departments and were asked to fill the form. A sample size of 300 were chosen based on random sampling method and the questionnaire consisting of 15 minor questions and five major questions such as levels of stress, family situation, eating habits, type of stress and measures to relieve stress were distributed.

Under the major question section, first question revealed the comparison between students studying dental, medical, law, engineering and MBA having high level of stress. Second question showed which students have more family problems. Third question was framed in a way whether overeating habits are common for all students or

particular students studying specific course. Fourth question describes the type of stress in students which includes academics, peer pressure, college environment, money related problems and fear about future. Fifth major question suggest the stress relieve measures taken by students under stress. From these questions, results were taken and these results were tabulated using SPSS software.

RESULTS:

It was determined that MBBS and dental students had very high levels of stress and MBA students having lowest stress levels followed by law (FIGURE 1).

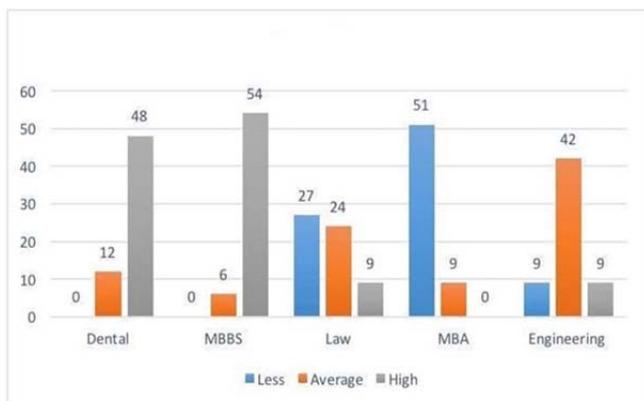


Figure 1-Levels Of Stress Among Students Of Various Professions

The stress levels among dental students was almost in par with the medical students. An analysis was made on the family problems faced by the students and related stress. It was found that the amount of stress faced by all the students were considerably less and 95.8% of MBA students were away from the family problems, while 20.9% of dental and medical students had family problems causing stress. (FIGURE 2)

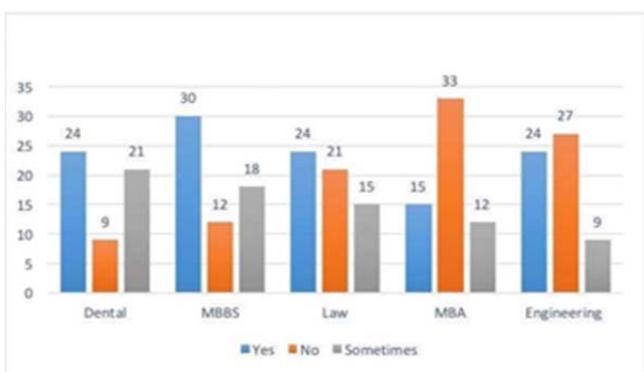


Figure 2-Family Problems Among Students

An analysis was made on the eating habits and its relation to stress. It was determined that Stress increased the apatite and over eating among Law students, followed by MBA and Engineering students while it did not have much effect on Dental and medical students. (FIGURE 3).

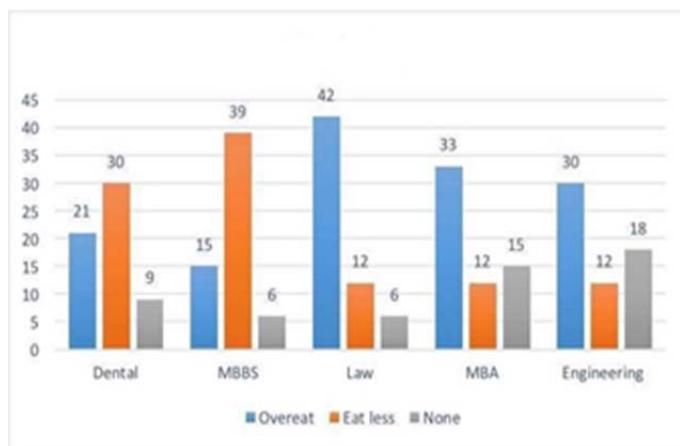


Figure 3-Eating Habits Of Students.

The various factors related to stress was analysed among students of all professionals and it was found that Academic stress was more in Dental and Medical students and it was the most common type of stress. The stress caused due to fear about future was appreciated more in MBA students followed by Law, Engineering , Dental and Medical students. Stress caused to the effect from peers was appreciated in the dental courses while it was not significant in other courses. It was determined that college environment and Monetary issues caused least levels of stress.(FIGURE 4).

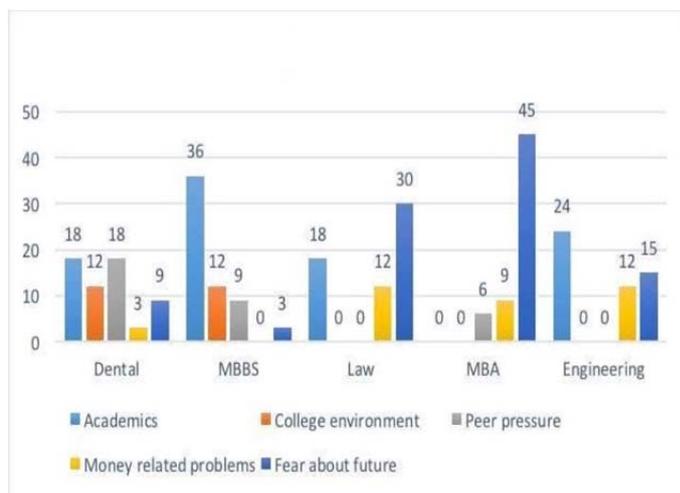


Figure 4-Factors Leading To Stress Among Students

An analysis to determine the effects of stress on professional students revealed that Anxiety was highest among MBA graduates followed by Engineering. Dental and Law students had least levels of anxiety and Medical students did not report of any anxiety. The depression level were highest in Dental, ,Medical and Engineering students, while law and management students did not face much depression. However the failure levels were much high among the Law students. It was also determined that MBA students faced higher blood pressure levels and obesity compared to all other profession.(FIGURE 5)

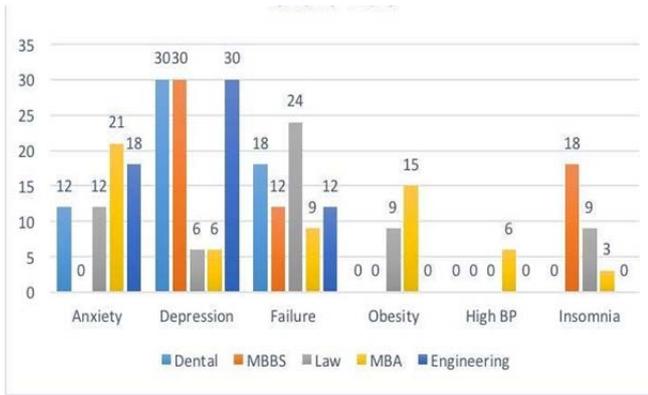


Figure 5-Effects Of Stress On Students

When the methods to alleviate stress among professional students were examined, it was found that Sleep and talking were the most common methods practiced among all students, while engineering students spent more time on Spending time of their interest. The other modes of elevating stress in order were eating, smoking, listening to music. A smaller group of population followed meditation and exercise and alcohol was the least used method among all professions. (FIGURE 6)

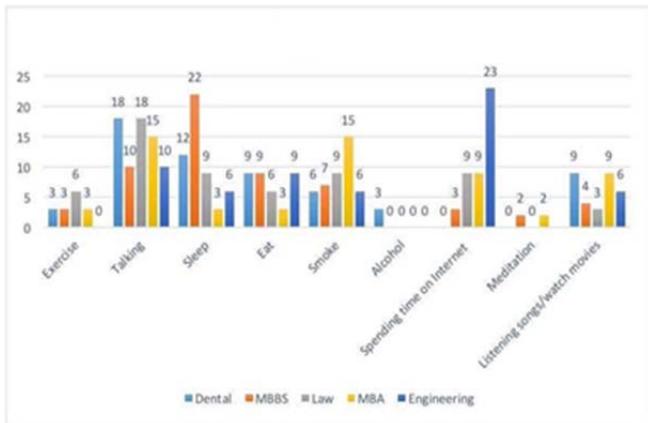


Figure 6-Stress Relief Measures Taken By Students

DISCUSSION:

From the above results, it was evident that males perceive more stress than females. This is because, a whole family is depended on male’s income which is the primary source of earning in the family. Because of responsibilities and family situations, men tend to have more stress. Nowadays students are subjected to intense stress. MBBS and BDS students are subjected to high level of stress. Parental pressure may be one of the reason for stress. Studious students are also facing stress due to academic workload. Parents are spending lots of money to make their children to study and get well educated. But some students fear about academics and are not able to concentrate. Family problems affect the students mainly students studying MBBS. Our study showed that Law students had increased appetite and over eating as a result of stress while the dental and medical students did not face much of over eating. Some students tend to have overeating habits because they are tired of academic work. Overeating habits lead to obesity and most of law students eat more due to stress. MBBS and

BDS students tend to have less overeating habits. Sometimes they don’t eat due to workload. This causes health problems and psychologically affected.

It was seen that anxiety about the future increased with each passing year and became the second top stressor in the fourth year. This was in agreement with previous studies, where final-year students showed greater anxiety about the future. These final year students were MBA students. Depression was found in dental and medical students as they fail in their exams or inability to complete the work within time. Work gets added which caused depression in them.

Fear of failure was the most stressful item across all classes. It was observed that stress due to workload and less time relaxation was consistently high from the first to the third years with a slight dip in the second year. It may be due to the fact that in both the first and third years, the students are exposed to a new dimension in education. It was also seen that stress associated with examinations was high across classes. This abrupt increase in stress was also reported in recent studies. Fear about future was seen in engineering students because their job is based on skills and knowledge they get from college.

Students who were forced by their parents showed higher stress levels than those whose first choice was dentistry, which is in accordance with the previous study. This may be due to the fact that these students had both a lack of interest in dentistry and its future scope or were not confident of completing the course, which may lead to stress. The major reason for this stress was found out to be our education system or the academics which is followed by the peer pressure. This stress gets added up due to certain deadlines, examinations and the quotas which are to be finished on time. This causes the students to fall into a depressed state which affects both their social life and their grades. Other minor effects include obesity and insomnia. When it comes to Engineering the stress levels are found to be average among the students. Equal percentage of students were found to be depressed in medical, dental and engineering. It is also found that dental and medical students are found to eat lesser while the other students are found to overeat. This maybe due to vastness of portions to study among medical and dental students which make them eat less in order to continue with their academics. Anxiety, depression and insomnia are the important effects of the stress faced by students

The major stress-busters are talking with friends, sleeping and spending time on Internet, smoking and listening to songs/watching movies being low key stress busters. Students pursuing law and MBA are found to have lower levels of stress when compared to others. Stress maybe concerned with money related problems and most importantly –fear about future. Talking with friends and smoking were found to be the important stress busters for law and MBA students. This stress also affects their health in an indirect way, as in some of the students have uncontrollable stress. Their way of reducing stress is by smoking which is really bad to health, thus stress is getting them under an addiction. So proper counselling should be given to the students to get them.

CONCLUSION:

Nowadays, stress is more common in students due to academics. This survey is conducted through a standardised questionnaire distributed to 300 students from various professional colleges. From this study one can infer easily that the stress levels faced by students in dental and medical courses are very high and that proper counselling should be provided to the students and prepare them to face the difficulties during their course and make sure that they deal with their problems in an effective manner. However the limitation of the study was lesser sample size from one private college. Further studies with large sample and a population from colleges throughout the state would give us more accurate results.

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