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## A Study on Stress Management among Postgraduate Students at Karnataka University, Dharwad

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### **Abstract:**

*This study investigates stress management among postgraduate students at Karnatak University, Dharwad. Stress is an inevitable aspect of life, especially in the academic context, where students are often exposed to both academic and personal pressures. The study aims to explore the level of stress experienced by these students, identify the key stressors, and evaluate the coping mechanisms employed to manage stress. Data were collected using an online self-structured questionnaire, targeting 54 students from the Faculty of Social Sciences, employing a purposive and snowball sampling method. The research findings highlight that financial difficulties and academic pressures are the primary sources of stress for students. A significant number of students reported experiencing stress related to academic activities, such as exams and assignments, as well as financial strain. The study also identifies various coping strategies, including participation in extracurricular activities, engaging in leisure activities, and seeking social support. Additionally, many students acknowledge the importance of stress management and demonstrate confidence in handling personal challenges. However, the study also reveals that a large portion of students experience symptoms like fatigue, sleep disturbances, and difficulty concentrating. These findings underscore the need for targeted stress management interventions, including counseling and lifestyle modifications, to help students manage stress more effectively and enhance their overall well-being.*

**Keywords:** Stress Management, Postgraduate Students, Coping Strategies, Academic Stress.

### **Introduction**

Stress is an unavoidable aspect of life, affecting individuals across various domains, including personal, professional, and social contexts. In today's fast-paced world, where success and achievement are highly prioritized, stress has become an

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enduring companion. It arises in different environments, such as at home, in schools, workplaces, and during daily activities. Throughout life, people encounter numerous stress-inducing situations that can have significant effects on their overall well-being.

While moderate levels of stress can be manageable, excessive stress can lead to both mental and physical imbalances, resulting in various health complications. Long-term or severe stress can contribute to serious conditions such as hypertension, cardiovascular diseases, and other health issues. Therefore, it is vital to identify the sources of stress and implement effective coping strategies. By doing so, individuals can manage their energy and potential, leading to more productive outcomes.

Stress is generally understood as any event or circumstance that triggers negative emotions or thoughts. However, people respond to stress in different ways, and reactions may vary even in similar situations. A valuable framework for understanding stress is the Person-Environment Model, proposed by French in 1973. According to this model, stress occurs when there is a mismatch between an individual and their environment. The model outlines three important distinctions to understand this relationship. First, it emphasizes the need to explore the reciprocal interaction between the individual and their environment. Second, it distinguishes between objective representations of the person and their environment, with the

objective person referring to actual characteristics and the subjective person representing the individual's perception of their traits. Lastly, the concept of "fit" is based on the alignment between the individual's capabilities and the demands of the environment, as well as how well the environment meets the individual's needs. This theoretical framework is crucial in understanding how stress develops and how it can be managed in various contexts.

Many students faced heightened levels of anxiety and stress. A majority of students reported experiencing moderate to high levels of stress during this period. Furthermore, there was an increase in the use of TV and mobile phones during the lockdown, while academic activities were notably reduced (Khadirnavar A A., Vanageri H., Asagi R E, 2021).

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Bukhsh, Shahzad and Nisa (2011) Investigates "The common symptoms of stress, causes of stress and to suggest stress management strategies used by students for coping with stress. For collecting data, survey method was adopted. This study was completed by following the procedure of descriptive method of research. 39 questions were used for data collection. 200 students from different departments of The Islamia University of Bahawalpur were chosen as a sample of the study. This study concluded that majority of students felt fatigue during stress. Burden of study, assignments were major causes of stress

and they agreed that they reduce stress by watching T.V/Movies, listen to music or take part in other leisure time activities. It was recommended that burden of study may be reduced by conducting co curricular activities in academic area.”

Nikitha, Jose and Valsaraj (2015) evaluated “The effectiveness of academic stress management programme on academic stress and academic performance”. Study was conducted among 96 subjects. Data were collected using Demographic Performa and Academic stress Rating Scale. Academic performance was assessed by verifying existing school records of formative evaluation test conducted in the month of January and February 2013. Academic stress management programme was provided one hour per day for three consecutive days. Data were analysed using t test and Wilcoxon signed rank test. Result showed a significant difference in pre test, post test stress level and academic performance. The findings of the study indicated that academic stress management programme was effective in reducing academic stress but not in improving academic performance.

Reddy et al. (2018) in their study concludes that stream wise difference in stress does exist in students. It is important to deal with stress at personal, social and institutional level. Remedies such as feedback, yoga, life skills training, mindfulness, meditation and psychotherapy have been found useful to deal with stress. To identify the main

reason of stress is the key to deal with it. Professionals can develop tailor made strategies to deal with stress. The integrated well being of the students is important not only for the individual but for the institute as well.

### **Objectives of the Study**

- To study the level of stress experienced by the students of Karnatak University Campus, Dharwad.
- To explore the factors causing stress among students of Karnatak University Campus, Dharwad.
- To study the stress management ways adopted by the students to reduce their stress levels.

### **Methodology**

The research methodology of this study was structured to provide a systematic framework for exploring and analyzing the research problem, employing a descriptive research design to facilitate the structured collection, measurement, and analysis of data. Data collection was conducted using an online self-structured questionnaire designed by the researcher, which included demographic variables and required respondents to select the option that most accurately reflected their experiences. From a universe of 919 students in the Faculty of Social Sciences at Karnatak University, Dharwad, a purposive cum snowball sampling method was employed to select 54 respondents, constituting 6% of the population. The collected data were carefully checked, coded, and tabulated before analysis using

Microsoft Excel. Descriptive statistics, dependent and independent variables, and such as frequency distributions and the findings were presented through percentages, were applied to analyze both tables, charts, and graphs for clarity.

### Result and discussion

**Table 1: Socio-economic Profile of Respondents**

SL No.	Category	Sub-category	Frequency (N=54)	Percentage (%)
1	Occupation of Respondents' Family	Government/Private Sector Employee	10	18.5
		Agriculture	35	64.8
		Own Business/Others	9	16.7
2	Annual Income of Respondents' Family	₹10,000 - ₹20,000	25	46.3
		₹20,000 - ₹30,000	10	18.5
		Above ₹30,000	19	35.2
3	Monthly Pocket Money of Respondents	₹100 - ₹500	26	48.1
		₹500 - ₹2,000 or Above	14	25.9
		None	14	25.9

The table No.1 shows the socioeconomic profile of the 54 respondents reveals significant insights into their backgrounds and financial situations. Regarding family occupation, a majority (64.8%) of respondents belong to agriculture-based families, highlighting a rural or agrarian background, while 18.5% are from families with government or private-sector employment, and only 16.7% are from families involved in their own business or other occupations. When examining annual family income, 46.3% of the respondents reported an income of ₹10,000–₹20,000, indicating a substantial portion of families living below the poverty line, while 35.2% reported incomes above ₹30,000, and 18.5% had incomes ranging between ₹20,000 and ₹30,000. Regarding monthly pocket money, nearly half of the respondents (48.1%) receive between ₹100–₹500,

reflecting limited discretionary spending ability, while 25.9% receive ₹500–₹2,000 or above, and another 25.9% reported receiving no pocket money at all. This data underscores the financial challenges faced by many students, with a predominance of low-income, agriculture-dependent families and limited financial independence through pocket money. These findings provide a critical context for understanding the socioeconomic status and challenges within the study group.

The table 2 focuses on respondents' stress levels and experiences; the data reveals a significant variation in how participants perceive stress in their daily lives. Approximately 40.7% of respondents have experienced stress in the past week, with a majority (59.3%) reporting no such experience.

**Table 2 : Stress and Coping Patterns among Respondents**

SL No.	Variables	Response	Frequency (N=54)	Percentage (%)
1	Have you experienced stress in the past week?	Yes	22	40.7
		No	32	59.3
2	Do you feel stressed every day?	Yes	10	18.5
		No	44	81.5
3	Do you feel things often go wrong for you?	Likely	14	25.9
		Uncertain	27	50.0
		Unlikely	13	24.1
4	Have you felt bad due to stress in the past week?	Yes	17	31.5
		No	37	68.5
5	Do you feel under stress always?	Yes	09	16.7
		No	45	83.3
6	Have you been upset due to unexpected events?	Never	06	11.1
		Sometimes	40	74.1
		Very Often	08	14.8
7	Do you feel stress because of academic activities?	Yes	24	44.4
		No	30	55.6
8	Do you experience stress from financial difficulties?	Yes	31	57.4
		No	23	42.6

However, only 18.5% of participants claim to feel stressed every day, indicating that while stress is prevalent, it may not be constant. When asked if they feel things often go wrong for them, 50% of respondents were uncertain, with 25.9% agreeing that things tend to go wrong and 24.1% disagreeing. This suggests a moderate level of personal uncertainty about life's challenges. Furthermore, 31.5% reported feeling bad due to stress in the past week, while 68.5% did not, pointing to differing emotional reactions to stress. A significant portion (74.1%) reported being occasionally upset by unexpected events, reflecting a tendency toward emotional reactivity. Concerning

copied with social situations, 59.3% felt neutral about friends joking about them, while 24.1% found it true and 16.7% false, indicating varied sensitivity to social interactions. Sleep disruption also emerged as a theme, with 42.6% experiencing sleep deprivation and 35.2% feeling they had sufficient sleep, showcasing diverse sleep patterns. In terms of family peace, a striking 70.4% felt no peace, which could indicate underlying familial tensions. Additionally, respondents showed varied levels of stress linked to academic and financial pressures, with 44.4% reporting stress from academics and 42.6% from finances. Social relationships also play a role in

stress, with 64.8% reporting five to ten friends, suggesting that social connections might offer some stress relief. Participation in extracurricular activities (57.4%) also appears to be a common strategy to manage stress, with a majority of respondents feeling more confident in their ability to handle personal problems

(98.1% combined responses for always or sometimes). The fact that 50% of respondents consider stress to be important while 88.9% agree that stress management is important suggests an awareness of the necessity of managing stress for overall well-being.

**Table 3: Coping Mechanisms and Personal Reactions**

S.N	Variables	Responses	Frequency (54)	Percentage
1	How do you feel when friends joke about you?	True	13	24.1
		In Between	32	59.3
		False	09	16.7
2	Is it difficult for you to concentrate?	Always	09	16.6
		Anytime	19	35.2
		Not at All	26	48.1
3	Do you go to sleep late and have less sleep?	Always	12	22.2
		Anytime	23	42.6
		Not at All	19	35.2
4	Do you feel peace among your family members?	Always	05	9.3
		Anytime	11	20.4
		Not at All	38	70.4
5	Do you feel tiredness quickly?	Always	14	25.9
		Sometimes	17	31.5
		Not at All	23	42.6
6	How many friends do you have in class?	One to Five	16	29.6
		5-10	35	64.8
		None	03	05.6
7	Do you participate in extracurricular activities?	Often	31	57.4
		Seldom	17	31.5
		Never	06	11.1
8	How do you evaluate yourself compared to classmates?	Better	28	51.9
		Equal	24	44.4
		Lower	2	03.7
9	How frequently are exams held?	Monthly	48	88.9
		Weekly	05	09.3
		Daily	01	01.8
10	Is stress management important?	Yes	48	88.9
		No	06	11.1
11	Do you feel confident in handling personal problems?	Always	24	44.4
		Sometimes	29	53.7
		Never	01	01.8

Table 3 examines the coping mechanisms and stress management strategies of the respondents, the data highlights key coping strategies employed by the participants. A majority (57.4%) engage in extracurricular activities often, indicating that these activities serve as a regular outlet for managing stress. Similarly, 51.9% of respondents evaluate themselves as better than their classmates, which may reflect self-confidence, while 44.4% believe they are on par with their peers, suggesting a relatively high level of social comparison. Only a small portion (3.7%) reported feeling lower in comparison to others, potentially indicating feelings of inadequacy or stress related to academic performance. Regarding the frequency of exams, 88.9% of respondents experience monthly exams, which could contribute to academic-related stress, with a smaller portion encountering weekly or daily exams. This frequency of academic evaluations may amplify stress levels, particularly for those struggling with time management or exam-related anxiety. Interestingly, the data also shows that half of the respondents believe stress is not important, while the other half views stress as significant, reflecting a division in how stress is perceived and its impact on daily life. Most respondents (88.9%) believe stress management is important, signaling a broad recognition of the need for strategies to mitigate stress. Finally, when considering confidence in managing

personal problems, most respondents (44.4%) reported always feeling confident, with 53.7% feeling confident sometimes, this highlights a high level of self-efficacy in handling personal challenges. Together, the findings suggest that while stress is acknowledged by a significant portion of the respondents, they utilize a range of coping mechanisms, such as engaging in extracurricular activities, relying on social support, and feeling relatively confident in managing their personal stressors. These results provide insights into the ways in which respondents cope with stress and the importance they place on stress management strategies.

### **Conclusion**

The findings of this study highlight those postgraduate students at Karnataka University experience significant stress, primarily driven by academic and financial challenges. Symptoms of stress, such as disrupted sleep patterns, were notably prevalent among the students. Financial and psychological factors emerged as the leading causes of stress, with students reporting a decline in concentration on studies and daily activities. To manage these stressors, students employed various coping strategies, including meditation, music, reading, watching TV, playing games, physical exercise, and seeking counseling.

Additionally, the rise in social media usage has contributed to a more self-centered mindset among students,

reducing face-to-face interactions with family and friends and leading to decreased physical activity. These lifestyle changes have been linked to higher levels of stress, potentially escalating the risks of depression and even suicidal tendencies. Therefore, it is crucial for young people to adopt balanced lifestyles, set clear objectives, limit excessive use of technology, and maintain meaningful personal connections. Encouraging open communication with loved ones can also play a vital role in alleviating stress and improving overall well-being.

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