

## **A Study on the Levels of Stress among Post Graduate Students of Mahapurusha**

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**ABSTRACT:** Stress is normally an unavoidable part of everyone's life living in this world. It portrays a negative notion that can have an impact on one's mental and physical well-being. Stress is always regarded as a psychological process that involves an individual's personal interpretation and response to any threatening event. Stress is an unavoidable part of life everybody meet with stress in his/ her life; it can take a toll on students' physical health, mental health, and academic success and even on every part of life unless they discover to cope with it appropriately. Stress has a negative impact on one's mental and physical wellbeing. Throughout a lifetime, one may experience thousands of different episodes of stress. It means that stress may be a normal, adaptive reaction to threat. Its role is to signal and prepare individuals to take defensive action. Take for instance, fear of things that present realistic threats motivates individuals to deal with them or avoid them. . College and Post Graduation students experience stress connected to changes in lifestyle, increased workload, new tasks, interpersonal relationships and a lot of other things. Tremendous levels of stress can hinder work efficacy and lead to meagre academic performance and at the same time it affects one's overall happiness.

**Keywords:** Stress, Post Graduate students, Mental Heath, Workload, Happiness.

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Stress is always regarded as a psychological process that involves an individual's personal interpretation and response to any threatening event. The term Stress was coined by Hans Selye in 1936, who defined it as "the non- specific response of the body to any demand for change". Stress is becoming part of human life and every individual faces stress in their life. Stress has a negative impact on one's mental and physical wellbeing. Throughout a lifetime, one may experience thousands of different episodes of stress. The level of stress may vary from intense to minimal (Maheswari & Deepa, 2013). It is important to note that stress can have both positive and negative effects on people. It means that stress may be a normal, adaptive reaction to threat. Its role is to signal and prepare individuals to take defensive action. Take for instance, fear of things that present realistic threats motivates individuals to deal with them or avoid them. Most psychologists assert that moderate stress motives individuals to achieve and fuels creativity, although stress may hinder individuals from performance on difficult tasks (Auerbach & Grambling 1998). Everybody meets with stress in his/ her life; it can take a toll on students' physical health, mental health, and academic success and even on every part of life unless they discover to cope with it appropriately. College and Post Graduation students experience stress connected to changes in lifestyle, increased workload, new tasks, interpersonal relationships and a lot of other things. Tremendous levels of stress can hinder work efficacy and lead to meagre academic performance and at the same time it affects one's overall happiness. Such students who have experienced stressful life events also reported worse health outcomes and reduced quality of life most of the time. Alteration of student's environment from school surroundings to university surroundings could cause a mental, educational and social shock to them, since this didactic system has vast differences. The students have to countenance new methods

of training, new atmosphere, new scholastic requirements, new kind of relations between students and faculties and even new relations among students themselves. Stress is one of the major facets of our contemporary life, resulted from the swift changes and modernity in human beings, so this period is called the age of stress. Students undergo from many stresses like educational stress resulted from testing and exams, home works and additional school necessities which may go beyond their abilities. Mothers have their own stress resulted from child schooling, workers, leaders, and whole society have diverse form of stress, sometimes the same person undergoes from different kinds of stress at one moment (Hussien and Hussien, 2006).

### **1.1 THE TWO FACES OF STRESS**

Stress can be negative or positive, depending on the level of our response to the stressors we encounter. Apparently, most of us only think about the bad sides of stress. Negative stresses are actually about stresses that are beyond one's control. This bad impact of severe stress is often manifested in physical and mental signs and symptoms. However, when we are only exposed to mild or moderate stress, we are actually able to experience the good side of stress, which include improved creativity, learning, efficiency at work and, eventually, a higher level of self-esteem that could lead us to be able to withstand a higher stress levels in the future.

### **1.2 EFFECTS OF STRESS**

It has been argued that an individual can have possibly anxious thoughts, difficulty to concentrate or remember because of being stressed. Stress can lead also to change in people's behaviours, such as nail biting, heavy breathing, teeth clenching and hand wringing. When people are stressed, they may feel cold hands and feet, butterflies in stomach, and sometimes-increased heart rate, which all are regarded as common physiological effects of stress, which can be connected to emotion of anxiety (Auerbach & Gramling, 1998). Physical and psychological responses to stress generally occur together, principally when stressors become more intense. However, one category of stress responses can influence other responses. For instance, mild chest pain may lead to the psychological stress response of worrying about getting a heart attack. Physical responses can be when a person escapes from a terrible accident or some other frightening events, he or she will experience rapid breathing, increased heart beating, sweating, and even shaking little later. These reactions are part of a general pattern known as the fight-or-flight syndrome. The psychological responses to stress can appear as changes in emotions, thoughts (cognition), and behaviours (Bernstein et al., 2008).

### **1.3 A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF MAHAPURUSHA SRIMANTA SANKARADEVA VISWAVIDYALAYA UNIVERSITY**

Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankaradeva Viswavidyalaya is a University established through The Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankaradeva Viswavidyalaya Act, 2013 in the state of Assam. The University is located in Nagaon, the birthplace of the great Scholar, Saint of Assam, Srimanta Sankaradeva and is named after him. The University has one more campus at Guwahati. The Nagaon Campus of the University has 6 Departments which conducts both Master Degree and Research Programmes. The University is one of its kinds that try to provide higher education with a touch of Spirituality and Modernity.

### **1.4 NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

In today's highly competitive world, students face various academic problems including exam stress, disinterest in attending classes and inability to understand the subject. In educational institution, more stress is given to the academic achievement of the students though various other outcomes are also expected. Thus, the expectation for high level of performance puts a lot of pressure on parents, teachers, administrators, students and as a whole educational system itself.

Stress is one of the serious issues that affect university student's life; its effects could be reflected in

student social, academics, and mental health. Linn and Zeppa (1984) found that stress can lead to academic decline, poor relationships with peers and family members and overall dissatisfaction with life. So each university has to assess its students stress in order to provide them with the suitable mental health care and the efficient methods to cope with stress. Higher education is one of the main factors that enable individuals to become successful in obtaining a profession in order to face the different challenges of life. College life can be challenging and difficult for a new student. However, it requires a higher degree of student initiative, determination, and self-monitoring. A huge amount of research has attempted to identify important factors of student's success by assessing the relations among many psychological and academic variables. Few studies have used different methods to propose and test models that can be used to understand the relations among factors that influence student's academic success.

The present study may develop insight to authorities so that they can find the reasons of stress in post graduate students of Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankaradeva Viswavidyalaya and the measures may be taken to prevent it. The post graduate students are in the highest step of formal educational ladder. They have to develop competition, guilt proneness, boldness, enthusiasm, sensitivity etc. Being the highest step of formal educational ladder the PG students represent a significant student group who can be handled by the peers and teachers at the last level of the formal education ladder. Understanding of stress is become very important because of the impact that may has on student's overall adjustment as well as their academic achievement.

Therefore, the present study was very significant to analyze the stress level of students of the post graduate level of Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankaradeva Viswavidyalaya. The investigator wanted to know how students perceive stress and how they cope with it on daily basis, as they are struggling to reduce and control the negative effects on their health and their academic performance. It is very important for postgraduate students to learn how to manage the stress, even if it cannot be eliminated. The findings may be useful in providing the opportunities and exposure for post graduate students for developing the healthy competitive feelings. Limited research has been done in this area. The study was carried out to find out how different stress can affect on students' day to day life. It will help teachers, parents and guidance workers in guiding and motivating the students as per their requirement. So, to increase the level of academic achievement of the post graduate students, findings of such researches help everyone related to the education system. This study would help the students to discover the various stressors affecting their day to day life. It will help the faculties in determining the stressors affecting their students and to guide the students in reducing the stress level so that they are more shaped and ready to face the challenges confidently. The study will also give an insight to the management to design and implement new programs that would facilitate in reducing the stress on students.

## **1.5 TITLE OF THE STUDY**

The investigator titled the present study as **“A STUDY ON THE LEVELS OF STRESS AMONG POST GRADUATE STUDENTS OF MAHAPURUSHA SRIMANTA SANKARADEVA VISWAVIDYALAYA”**

## **1.6 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The investigator of the present study framed the following objectives:

- 1.6.1** To study the levels of stress of post graduate students of Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankaradeva Viswavidyalaya.
- 1.6.2** To compare the levels of stress of 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> semester post graduate students of Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankaradeva Viswavidyalaya.
- 1.6.3** To suggest measures to overcome stress among students.

## 1.7 HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

**Ho<sub>1</sub>.** There is no significant difference between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> semester students of Post Graduate students of Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankaradeva Viswavidyalaya as far as their level of stress are concerned.

## 1.8 DEFINITION OF IMPORTANT TERMS

**1.8.1 Stress:** Stress can refer to experiencing events perceived as endangering one's physiological, physical or psychological wellbeing or a combination of these and when there is excessive pressure its intensity and chronic nature can lead to mental and physical ill health including depression, nervous breakdown and heart disease (Quick, Nelson and Hurrell, 1997).

**1.8.2 Post Graduate students:** Post Graduate students usually mean the group of students who have completed their under-graduate programmes and are enrolled in higher studies, usually in a University, for the postgraduate degree. In the context of the present study, Post Graduate students referred to the students studying in the 2 year CBCS programmes in the PG Departments of Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankaradeva Viswavidyalaya during the academic session 2018-20.

## 2.0 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

'College Chronic Life Stress Survey' constructed by **Towbes and Cohen (1996)** focuses on the frequency of chronic stress in the lives of college students. This scale contains items that persist across time to create stress, such as interpersonal conflicts, self-esteem problems, and money problems. These stressors were evaluated in relation to the number of times; a student had to deal with them on a weekly basis. It was found that with regard to chronic stress, first-year students scored higher than other students. **Rocha-Singh (1994)** has examined sources of stress among undergraduates through similar studies.

**Do Dinh (2007)** had conducted a study where she found that 1<sup>st</sup> year medical students of University of Pharmacy and Medicine at HoChiMinh, Vietnam had experienced more stress related to Environmental, Intra-Personal and Academic area.

**Ross, Niebling and Heckert (2008)** conducted a study where the students from Midwestern University had experienced stress arising from all of the four major stressors i.e. Intra-Personal, Interpersonal, Academic and Environmental.

A study by **Behere, Yadav and Behere (2011)** found a higher level of stress among medical and engineering students. Similar finding was discovered by **Yusoff, Rahim and Yaacob (2010)** in the study of medical students at University Sains in Malaysia.

**Mazumdar, Gogoi, Buragohain and Haloi (2012)** conducted a comparative study on stress and its contributing factors among the graduate and post-graduate students of various colleges of Assam. From the study it was found in that the various symptoms which lead to stress mostly seen in more numbers in females as compared to males. It was also found that college students were highly affected by the stressful condition. Post graduate students were more susceptible to stress due to the increase in the responsibility than the graduate students.

**Ghaderi, Kumar, Kumar (2009)** Mysore University, Mysore conducted a study on Depression, Anxiety and Stress among the Indian and Iranian Students The data is collected from students studying in different departments of University of Mysore, studying post-graduate and Ph.D. degree courses. From the study it was found that Indian students were significantly more stressful than Iranian students and also gender-wise a non significant difference was observed between male and female students.

**Nandamuri and Gowthami (2009)** did a study on sources of academic stress a study on management students. The major objective of the study was to explore the components of academic stress among the post graduate management students. From the study it was found that the components of

academic activity were identified as – curriculum and instruction; team work; assessment; and placement and hence it was clearly identified that the components of academic work are responsible for academic stress among the management students.

### **3.0 METHOD OF STUDY**

For the present study, the investigator has used the descriptive survey method for collection of data and other related information.

#### **3.1 TOOLS USED FOR THE STUDY**

According to the need of the study, the investigator had used the following tool for analyzing and interpretation of the data.

**3.1.1 Perceived Stress Scale:** To measure the level of stress “Perceived Stress Scale” by Cohen, Kamarch, & Mermelstein, 1983 was used by the investigator. It is one of the most popular tools for measuring psychological stress. It is a self-reported questionnaire that was designed to measure “the degree to which individuals appraise situations in their lives as stressful” (Cohen et al., 1983, p. 385). The PSS items evaluate the degree to which individuals believe their life has been unpredictable, uncontrollable, and overloaded during the previous month. The assessed items are general in nature rather than focusing on specific events or experiences. There are three versions of the PSS. The original instrument is a 14 item scale (PSS-14) that was developed in English (Cohen et al., 1983), with 7 positive items and 7 negative items rated on a 5-point Likert scale. The developer made the all three version of PSS available for free download from the internet means it is an open source tool. The investigator used the Perceived Stress Scale that has 14 items which is formally known as PSS-14. The reliability and validity of PSS-14 is as follows

Reliability:  $\alpha = .78$

Validity: Correlates in a predicted way with other measure of stress (Job Responsibilities Scale, life events scales).

Scaling: 0 = Never; 1 = Almost Never; 2 = Sometimes; 3 = Fairly often; 4 = Very often

Scoring= PSS-14 scores are obtained by reversing the scores on the seven positive items, e.g., 0=4, 1=3, 2=2, etc., and then summing across all 14 items. Items 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, and 13 are the positively stated items.

#### **3.2 POPULATION OF THE STUDY**

In the present study, the total comprises all the Post-graduate students of Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankaradeva Viswavidyalaya. There are about 342 students in the Nagaon Campus of the University including the six departments of the university.

#### **3.3 SAMPLE OF THE STUDY**

The investigator used the Incidental Sampling Technique for selecting the sample for the study. Out of the total population, a total of 30 students were taken as the sample for study, and hence, data was collected from those 30 students of the University.

#### **3.4 COLLECTION OF DATA**

The investigator collected all the data from the students directly who were the primary sources of data.

#### **3.5 STATISTICAL TECHNIQUE USED**

Taking into consideration the objectives and hypothesis of the study, the following statistical techniques were used for the analysis and interpretation of the data:

1. For objective no.1 Mean, Median, Mode, Kurtosis and Skewness were calculated.
2. For objective 2 t test was done.

3. For objective 3 qualitative analysis was done.

### 3.6 ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

After the collection of data, the next step is proper analysis and interpretation of data. In the present study, the investigator has tabulated the data and analyzed it objective-wise. The investigator tested the null-hypothesis at 0.05 level.

**Objective 1:** To study the levels of stress of post graduate students of Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankaradeva Viswavidyalaya.

**Table 3.6.1 Level of stress of P.G. students of MSSV**

Variable	Sample (N)	Mean	Median	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Level of stress of P.G. students of MSSV	30	27.97	28.00	5.748	-0.44	0.845

From the above Table 3.6.1, the Mean, Median, and Standard Deviation of the total 30 scores of PG students studying in Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankaradeva Viswavidyalaya were found to be 27.97, 28.00 and 5.748 respectively. The value of skewness was -0.44; thus the scores were negatively skewed, i.e. majority of the PG students scored high in PSS-14 scale. The value of kurtosis for the sample was 0.845 which was higher than normal curve (.263). It indicates that the distribution of scores was platykurtic in nature; i.e. the curve is flatter than the normal curve.

**Objective 2:** To compare the levels of stress of 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> semester post graduate students of Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankaradeva Viswavidyalaya.

To fulfil the above objective, the following null hypothesis was formulated.

**Ho<sub>1</sub>.** There is no significant difference between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> semester students of Post Graduate students of Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankaradeva Viswavidyalaya as far as their level of stress are concerned.

**Table 3.6.2**

**t-test for significance of difference between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> semester students of Post Graduate students of Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankaradeva Viswavidyalaya as far as their level of stress are concerned**

Category (Semester)	Sample (N)	Mean	SD	SE <sub>M</sub>	SE <sub>D</sub>	df	't' Value	Significance
1 <sup>st</sup>	15	28.6400	5.38115	0.43937	0.64824	28	1.573	Not significant at 0.05 level
3 <sup>rd</sup>	15	27.6200	5.83747	0.47663				

Table 3.6.2 shows that the 't' value was found to be (1.573) which is less than the tabulated value (2.05) at 0.05 level. Thus, the null hypothesis, "There is no significant difference between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> semester students of Post Graduate students of Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankaradeva Viswavidyalaya as far as their level of stress are concerned" is accepted. The study found that there was no significant difference between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> semester Post Graduate students of Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankaradeva Viswavidyalaya as far as their levels of stress are concerned.

**Objective 3:** To suggest measures to overcome stress among students.

- **Study more effectively (Do Smart Work).**
- **Find ways to calm down.** Do exercise, Yoga etc.
- **Maintain your daily diet (Improve your diet).** Eat well and eat properly. For example, too much caffeine can exacerbate the physical symptoms of test anxiety.
- **Get enough sleep (Go to sleep early and get up early).**
- **Exercise regularly.** Exercise can release tension, and the less tension you feel as you go into the test, the better off you might be.
- **Smile more often and find reasons to be optimistic.** Remember smile is the first sign of happiness and the more you become happy, the less you experience stress.
- **Try to avoid using Smartphone (Social Media).** Don't let social media fool you.
- **Enjoy the little things in life.**
- **Practice different methods of Positive Psychology.**

### 3.7 FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

- Majority of the PG students scored higher than the average (higher on the right side than the left side of the average) hence, the scores were negatively skewed. Again the value of kurtosis indicated that the distribution of scores was platykurtic in nature.
- The t value was found less than the tabulated value at 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis, *“There is no significant difference between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> semester students of Post Graduate students of Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankaradeva Viswavidyalaya as far as their level of stress are concerned”* was accepted and it was concluded that *“There was no significant difference between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> semester students of Post Graduate students of Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankaradeva Viswavidyalaya as far as their level of stress are concerned.”*
- At first it was predicted and assumed that the level of stress of PG students of MSSV could increase or decrease over a period of time (semester). Hence the cognitive responses, being very much flexible in nature, can change over time and from environment to environment. We know that human behaviour does not remain static all the time, so as the responses regarding stress given by the respondents might have changed over the time on the two different tools. Although, the result found indicates that there is no difference regarding stress level between 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> semester students, it is necessary to conduct more systematic and accurate research in this context.

**Conclusion:** In conclusion, the results are suggestive as to the necessary components of a stress management program specific to the needs of PG students, university administrators should consider incorporating stress management training in orientation activities. At a minimum, the sources of stress identified as the most common could be discussed with incoming freshman, Furthermore, students should be informed of the campus resources available to help them address these resources. A better approach may be the use of a stress management workshop, specifically geared to the stressors encountered by PG students, certainly, stress in the university setting cannot be eliminated but we can and should do a better pre university preparing programme to make our students to know how to deal with it.

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