

Coping Strategies for Four Factors of Stress Among UiTM Jasin Students

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HIGHLIGHTS

- Descriptive statistics was used to know the level of stress and coping strategies among students.
- Chi-square test was used to determine the relationship between effects of stress and gender of students.
- There are four factors of stress in this study.

ABSTRACT

University students often face different kinds of stress such as problems with studies, family, friends and financial. This predisposes them to anxiety, sadness, anger and depression. To overcome their stress, students use different types of coping strategies. This study aims to investigate the stress level and the coping strategies by the university students and also to identify the relationship between the effects of stress based on their gender. The data in this study are primary data that were collected through direct questionnaire. Descriptive analysis and chi-square test were used to analyse the data. The result of this study indicates that a majority of the students have moderate level of stress. Many of the students become sad when they are in stress. In order to reduce the stress, most of the students sleep, followed by listening to music. The chi-square test shows no relationship between the effects of stress among female and male students.

Keywords: stress and coping, effect of stress, stress factors, level of stress

INTRODUCTION

A study by Irshad et al. (2015) reported that most of the students in the university face a lot of pressure and stress from family and lecturers. They have to maintain their quality of work, complete their assignments on time without any mistakes. Irpan et al. (2018) found that most university students are stressed with the study activities in terms of having to do a lot of assignments, projects and presentations that need to be completed during the semester.

A lot of people around the world have experience of stress irrespective of their age, race, colour and ethnicity, professional or academic background (Esia-Donkoh et al., 2011). A researcher, Yusoff (2010) defined stress as emotional disturbances or changes caused by stressors. Stress which promotes and facilitates learning is called good stress while stress which inhibits and suppresses learning is called bad



stress. Anspaugh et al. (2003) shared that stress comes in several forms and affects people of all ages and walks of life. This implies that life itself is stress related depending on the individual's lifestyle and the type of cultural development.

Academic stress, non-academic stress, coping techniques, and academic performance among undergraduate students in the Department of Quantity Surveying are all investigated in Oyewobi et al. (2020). The findings showed that both academic and non-academic stress have an influence on students' performance, and that students' coping strategies may help to mitigate the impacts.

Coping mechanism plays a major role in managing or reducing the stress of a person. Students use different types of coping mechanism to overcome their stress. For example, Pariat et al. (2014) reviewed that students cope with prayers, meditation and sleep which are very effective if the students have academic stress. If the students cannot handle the stress, it causes negative effects such as sleeping and health problems, that lead to anxiety and depression. Irpan et al. (2018) found that by sleeping, listening to music, going out for eating, chatting with friends and doing exercises are helpful to release stress. Researchers, Irshad et al. (2015) developed the coping scale for university students and revealed the five factor analysis solutions including solution focused coping, emotion coping, avoidance coping, seeking coping and spiritual coping.

Many studies have attempted to reveal the factors of stress and coping strategies among university students. Ann et al. (2009) studied the causes of stress and found that lack of sleep, financial and family problems cause stress among Management and Science university students. All the students reported that financial was the main causes of stress. Students were able to identify stress-relieving activities such as meditation, getting enough sleep, socialising with friends, and therapy. In another study by Bulo and Sanchez (2014), working with people they do not know, trouble with parents, and relationships with opposite sex are the most contributing factors of stress among college students.

The findings in Ramachandiran and Dhanapal (2018) showed clearly that at the percentage of 78.2%, which is a majority of the respondents, fell under moderate level of stress. It was also proven that studies, peer pressure, family problems and financial problems are the sources of the stress. According to the findings, university/college management teams should take constructive actions to lessen students' stress to guarantee that they have excellent mental health and can perform well in their studies.

Rana et al. (2019) stated that stress can be negative or positive to an individual. It depends on the strength and persistence of the stress, the personality of an individual, cognitive appraisal of the stress, and social support. This study also stated that stress affects students in four categories which are academic, social, physical, and emotional. As a result, it is a wake-up call for parents, teachers, and counsellors to educate students on the stress coping techniques for them to have a brighter future and a healthy well-being.

Mannadhan and Mohan (2014) revealed that anxiety has a significant role in student's stress. As a result, teaching faculties must focus on managing students' anxiety, which will naturally reduce stress among students. Saleh et al. (2017) found that most university students have significant levels of perceived stress and psychological distress and low levels of self-esteem, optimism, and self-efficacy. In fact, these research shows that concentrating on self-efficacy and self-esteem may be important in prevention programs for students.

Career choices, work possibilities, and financial concerns are all common general stressors, while getting emotional support from friends and family, as well as utilising self-distractions, are two popular stress-coping techniques among future pharmacists (Hanna et al., 2018). According to Norphun et al. (2020), a majority of medical students had moderate and high stress level. Adaptive coping techniques (self-distraction, acceptance, active coping, and positive reframing) were more typically adopted by medical



students than maladaptive coping techniques (denial and substance use). Masilamani et al. (2019) in their study found that the highest stressor among university nursing students was clinical stressor compared to three others stressors: educational, confidence and financial. Religion (prayer), acceptance, and preparation were the top three coping mechanisms used by student nurses.

Ganesan et al. (2018) found that meeting with friends, asking advice from others and talking to people to get emotional support are the best coping strategy preferred by undergraduate students when dealing with stress. In another study, prayers, meditation, visiting relatives, changing eating habits, watching movies and online chatting were the coping strategies by the medical students listed by Shaikh et al. (2004). It can be concluded that the students create a positive way to manage their stress in terms of personal growth and feelings that the stress they went through could change them in a good way.

The characteristics that are shown to be strongly connected with stress among students are pressure to maintain good grades, continuous assessments, lecturers' teaching approaches, large number of subjects and credit hours, timetable/study schedule, extracurricular activities, financial problems, lack of leisure time, family and peer-related problems, homesickness, difficulty in time management, sleep deprivation, lack of physical activity, unhealthy eating pattern, lodging or transportation problems, loneliness, and excessive gadget usage. The common stress coping strategies include meditation, yoga or tai chi, and emotional eating (Tangiisuran et al., 2020).

This study aims to investigate the stress level and the coping strategies by the undergraduates university students. This study also aims to identify the relationship between the effects of stress based on their gender. The data in this study are primary data that were collected through direct questionnaire.

METHODOLOGY

This study was done among 50 undergraduate students in Faculty of Plantation and Agrotechnology in UiTM Jasin, Melaka. They were in the second year-of their study. Convenience sampling was used to select 50 samples of the students. Data collection method used in this study is direct questionnaire which was distributed to the students during lecture time. The researcher greeted the respondents and explained briefly before giving the questionnaires to the respondents. The researcher waited for the respondents to complete the questionnaires. The variables of interest in this study are age, level of stress, factor of stress, stress reliever and consequences after stress. The data were analysed using descriptive analysis to find the level of stress and chi-square test to check the relationship between the effects of stress and gender.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section explains the findings obtained from the survey carried out among 50 respondents that consist of 25 male and 25 female students. In terms of age, the respondents were divided into 3 categories: 18 to 20, 21 to 23 and 24 to 26. The findings indicate that 62% of the respondents were between 18 and 20 years of age, 22% were 21 to 23, and 16% were more than 23 years of age. Figure 1 shows the classification of stress level among students. It shows that a majority of the students is under the moderate level of stress which is 54% followed by 32% of the students have high level of stress.



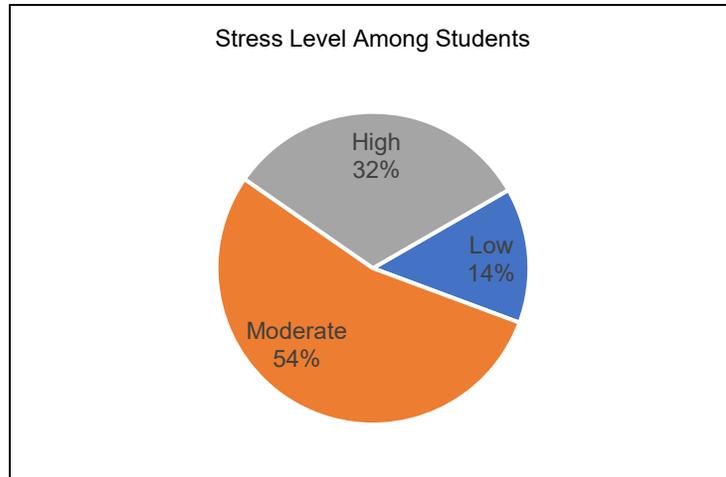


Figure 1. Classification of stress level among respondents

In response to the question factor or causes of their stress, only 47 students out of 50 responded to this question. Table 1 shows the findings where studies is the most contributing factors of stress, which is 42.6%. This may be caused by having to attend lectures on time, preparing for assignments, preparing individual or group projects and studying hard for examinations.

Table 1: Causes of stress among students

Causes of stress	Number of students	Percentage (%)
Studies	20	42.6
Family	5	10.6
Friends	10	21.3
Financial problems	12	25.5

This survey also reported the consequences after the stress as in Figure 2. A majority of the students responded that they experienced sadness after stress. From the total of 13 respondents who indicated that sadness was the effect of stress, five were male while another eight students were female. Another impact of stress by students were anger (20%), anxiety (7%), over sleeping (7%), inability to control their eating habits (7%) and depression (6%).



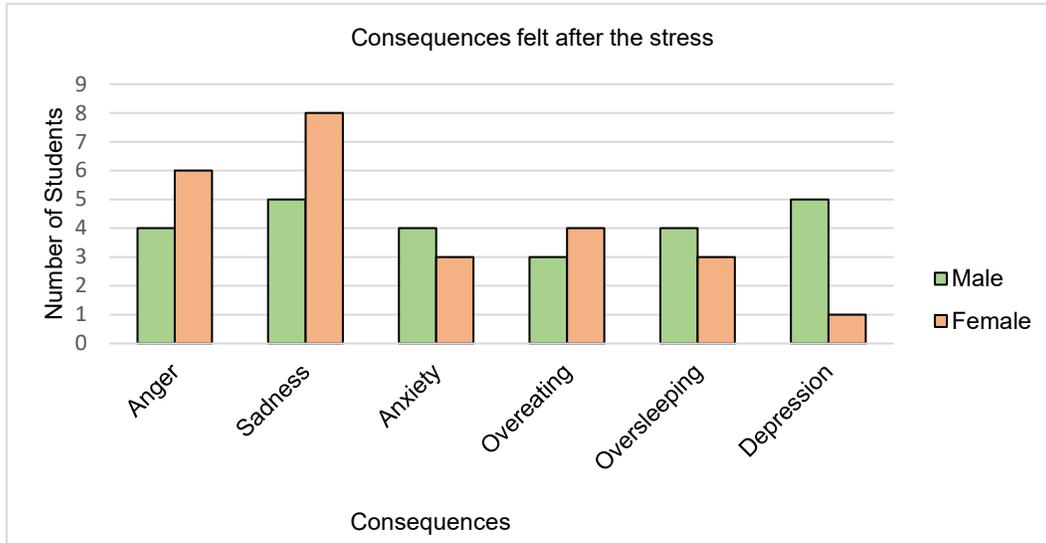


Figure 2. Consequences after stress by gender

Table 2: Stress reliever among students

Stress reliever	Number of students	Percentage (%)
Eating	6	12
Sleeping	15	30
Playing games/sports	10	20
Listening to music	13	26
Surfing the Internet/Social Media	6	12

The coping strategies among students are shown in Table 2. A majority, which is 30%, reported that getting enough sleep was the best way to reduce stress. This may be because sleep is an effective stress reliever. A regular sleep schedule relaxes and heals the body, enhances focus, controls mood, and sharpens judgment and decision-making abilities. Being well-rested can be a better problem solver and can help an individual handles stress better. 26% of the students reported that listening to music was one of the ways to cope with stress. Twenty percent of students reported that playing games was also a way to prevent stress. Only a small number of students, 6 (12%), reported that eating and surfing the internet helps to deal with stress.

Table 3 shows the effects of stress based on their gender. The chi-square test was used to determine the relationship between these two categorical data. The p value 0.523 which is more than 0.05 suggests that there is no significant association between the effects of stress among the students and their gender.

Table 3: Association between effects of stress and gender

Respondents	Male	Female	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Anger	4	6	0.523
Sadness	5	8	
Anxiety	4	3	
Effect Overeating	3	4	
Oversleeping	4	3	
Depression	5	1	
Total	25	25	



CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study reveals that most university students are under the moderate level of stress. The main stressor identified are studies such as having to attend lectures on time, preparing for assignments, preparing individual or group projects and studying hard for examinations. The frequently used coping strategy is sleeping, while eating and surfing the internet is the least frequently used coping strategy. In this survey, the respondents were asked to state the person that they shared their stress with. Best friend is the best person that is chosen by most of the students to share their stress with, followed by sharing with parents. The surprising answer from two students indicates that strangers are the person they share their stress with. Furthermore, there is no relationship between the effects of stress among male and female students. The limitation of this study was that the respondents in this study were drawn only from the Faculty of Plantation and Agrotechnology, UiTM Jasin, so the findings cannot be generalized for students of other faculties. As a recommendation, more studies can be conducted with more faculties and a larger sample size.

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CONFLICT OF INTERESTS DECLARATION

The authors declare no conflict of interests regarding the publication of this article.

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