

Perception Of Life Satisfaction And Levels Of Perceived Stress Among University Students Of Kolkata

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ABSTRACT

The present study was undertaken to examine the relationship between stress and life satisfaction in University Postgraduate students of Kolkata. A total of 70 Postgraduate students participated in the present study. Two standardized tools, The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10) and the Satisfaction with Life scale (SWLS) were used to collect data. Descriptive statistics, correlation and t-tests were carried out to analyze the data. Results indicated that there is negative but significant relationship between perceived stress and life satisfaction of sampled students. In addition, male postgraduate students were found to be more satisfied with their life than female students. The overall findings imply that regular monitoring of students' stress level and implementation of appropriate interventions are necessary.

Keywords: Perceived stress, Life Satisfaction, University Students.

1. INTRODUCTION

It is no secret that University students today face a lot of stress and daily hassles, whether living on off campus and whether they are in first year or last year. So it seems necessary to assess their stress so that they can be helped to manage their stress effectively and improve their life satisfaction. Life Satisfaction is a sense of well-being and is assessed in terms of satisfaction with relations with others, mood and with self-concept, achieved goals and self-perceived ability to cope with daily life. It is one of the positive adjustment indicators which are affected by the stressful lives of University students. Life satisfaction is an assessment of the overall conditions of existence as derived from a comparison of one's aspiration to one's actual achievements (George and Bearon, 1980). Life satisfaction is related with optimism (Extremera et al. 2009), academic performance, self-image (Chow, 2005), physical health, social relationships (Chow, 2005; Darling et al. 2007). In sum, Life satisfaction is a concept attributed as valuable by University students and it is highly correlated with both psychological variables and some daily life events. Therefore, it is one of the most important indicators of psychological health.

Perceived stress is the feelings or thoughts that an individual has about how much stress they are under at a given point in time or over a given time period. It incorporates feelings about the uncontrollability and unpredictability of one's life, how often one has to deal with irritating hassles, how much change is occurring in one's life and confidence in one's ability to deal with problems and difficulties. Research shows that University is the biggest cause of stress for a quarter (25%) of people between the ages of 19 and 24. The following issues can be a source of stress for University students: academic grade anxiety, ambiguity about their future plans, financial problems, family matters, relations with opposite sex and interpersonal relationships. Stress responses as causing various diseases like anxiety disorders, depression, high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease, certain gastrointestinal diseases etc.

Overwhelming psychological stress can cause both temporary and long-lasting symptoms of a serious psychiatric illness called Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

In psychology, the term coping generally refers to adaptive or constructive strategy that reduces stress level. Coping is expending conscious effort to solve personal and interpersonal problems, and seeking to master, minimize or tolerate stress or conflict. Perceived stress was a significant predictor for a low level of life satisfaction (Abolghasemi and Varaniyab, 2010; Cho and Kim, 2014; Extremera, Duran, and Rey, 2009; Hamarat et al., 2001; Matheny et al., 2002; Matheny, Roque-Tovar, and cudette, 2008; Yang and Kim, 2016). Simons et al. (2002) found that the level of life satisfaction was moderately predicted by perceived stress and coping resources availability. The present study intended to examine the relation between perceived stress and life satisfaction among male and female post-graduate students and the overall perceptions of life satisfaction among university students.

Researches in this area demonstrate a significant relationship between of life satisfaction and perceived stress. For instance, **Sin Tung et al. (2014)** examined the level of perceived stress, emotional syndrome and quality of life among students and evaluated if personal resources were associated with students' stress level. Results indicated that personal resilience affect the level of perceived stress experienced, and in turn affecting students' general well-being and hence, quality of life. They concluded that a high level of stress and psychological symptoms associated with poor personal resilience in withstanding stress, as well as poor quality of life and general health among students. Another study reported that the level of satisfaction in students about their university experience is in part determined by stress levels and personality type (**Agro et al. 2013**). **Alleyne et al. (2010)** suggested that increase of resilience and decrease of stress leads to more satisfaction. This is because the students feel better with developed resources for living well.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Given these perspectives the present study was conducted with the following objectives.

- To explore the relationship between perceived stress and life satisfaction among University students.
- To find out if there is any difference between genders regarding life satisfaction.

3. SAMPLE

In this study Stratified Random Sampling technique was used. Stratification was done according to Education (M.Sc. 1st year and M.Sc. 2nd year) and Gender (Male and Female). Sample comprised of 35 students of M.Sc. 1st year and 35 students of M.Sc. 2nd year. The 1st year students were all females and the 2nd year students were all males. The participants were aged between 21 and 24 years.

4. TOOLS USED

- Perceived stress was measured by the Cohen's Perceived Stress Scale (PSS -10), 1988. This is a 10 item self-report scale.
- The Life Satisfaction was assessed by the SWLS or Satisfaction with Life Scale by Diner et al. 1985. The total number of items of the scale is five.

The background information from the participants was collected by the general information schedule, where they indicated their age, gender, educational qualification, work status etc.

5. PROCEDURE

Data were collected from the sample following the questionnaire method. After scoring the responses, all data were tabulated. Data were analyzed by mean, standard deviation, correlation and t – tests.

6. RESULT AND ANALYSIS

Table-1: Descriptive statistics of the variables considered in this present study

Variables	Gender	Mean	*SD
Life Satisfaction	Male	22.5	6.33
	Female	19.57	5.32
Perceived Stress	Male	16.65	6.00
	Female	20.54	5.22

*SD = Standard Deviation

Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation values of life satisfaction and perceived stress regarding gender. According to the above table the mean and SD scores of females in respect of life satisfaction are quite lower than males. And also the mean score of females in respect of perceived stress is quite higher than males but SD score is lower than that of males.

Table 2: Correlation between perceived stress score and life satisfaction score

	Perceived stress score	Life Satisfaction score
Perceived stress score	1	-.459**
Pearson correlation		.000
Sig. (2-tailed)		
N	70	70
Life satisfaction score		1
Pearson correlation	-.459**	
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
N	70	70

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 3: Representation of t-values to find out significant differences between gender and life satisfaction

Life satisfaction (Gender Differences)	Mean	*SD	Calculated t-value	Degrees of freedom	Critical t (t*)
Male	22.5	6.33	2.103	68	At 5% level of significance = 1.994
Female	19.57	5.32			

*SD = Standard Deviation

Calculated t > Critical t*; Significant at 5% level

Table 3 suggests that there exists some difference in life satisfaction between male and female post-graduate students.

7. DISCUSSION

The major objective of the present study is to explore the relationship between perceived stress and life satisfaction among University students of Kolkata. Perception of life satisfaction and levels of perceived stress among University students have been assessed by standardized tests. The correlation values reveal that perceived stress and life satisfaction is significantly but negatively correlated. This finding is supported by previous studies. **Sin Tung et al. (2014)** report that a high level of stress and psychological symptoms are associated with poor personal resilience in withstanding stress, as well as poor quality of life and general health among the students. In other words with the increase of perceived stress, life satisfaction tends to decrease. **Alleyne et al. (2010)** have found that increase of resilience and decrease of stress leads to more satisfaction among students. **Asberg (2005)** has stated that stress, inadequate social support and escape or avoidance coping are related to higher levels of depression and lower life satisfaction in both male and females. The t-value reveals that the life satisfaction of male and female students is significantly different at .05 level of confidence. Male students are satisfied with their life but female students are not. Gender differences have been reported by a number of studies, For instance, **Moksnes et al. (2013)** have also found that boys have higher life satisfaction than girls. **Al Khatib (2013)** has found that female students have higher level of depressive symptoms which are associated with their lower life satisfaction.

Considering the above findings of the study, it can be said that perceived stress is a significant predictor for a low level of life satisfaction. Perceived stress is not merely assessing stressful life events but assessing the degree to which life situations are considered stressful. Entering University is a stressful time period for students as they are exposed to chronic stress related to new life circumstances. In this present study, the sampled students have participated from various family backgrounds. Their socio-economic status, life style and culture are different. Stress related to low socio-economic status affects students' academic performance as well as life satisfaction. Besides, high level of perceived stress is believed to affect students' health also.

University exam related stress also plays an important role in the students' life satisfaction. In University, students who are not satisfied with their result or academic achievement often feel depressed.

7. CONCLUSION

It can be concluded from this study, that University female students suffer from higher stress than male students that affects their daily life and overall satisfaction. So it is necessary to help the students in acquiring proper coping strategies to solve personal and interpersonal problems, so that they can master, minimize or tolerate stress. However the sample size is comparatively small to draw generalizations from this study. Future research should consider performing a large scale survey of both undergraduate and postgraduate students. In addition, focus groups can be conducted to understand how students feel about life on campus. Further, the studies can also consider testing for the impact of the variables such as socio-economic status, health, life styles on life satisfaction, coping strategies on perceived stress etc.

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