Factors Affecting Academic Stress of Undergraduates: with Reference to University of Sri Jayewardenepura

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Introduction

Academic stress can affect any person who engages in academic works, and the level of stress can vary from person to person. According to Mashi and Gulrez (2006), stress is one of the crises of a lifestyle which affects a person's mentality. Students' academic stress may be caused by different factors such as difficulty to adapt to a new academic environment, huge work load, financial problems, loss of a family member, lack of close friends, and exam failures (Furneaux, 1961; Sagar & Silgh, 2017). Most of the undergraduates confront emotional pressure when entering the university system. Moreover, they have to build interpersonal skills with different people who come from diverse backgrounds. Most of the students who have already enrolled in degree programs are required to do well in academic programs since their expectation is a good career at the end. Thus, academic stress can be formed automatically among the undergraduates. Hence, managing stress is very important to undergraduates to reach their expected academic performance. Similarly, graduates who can work in any work environment and are able to handle stress are necessary for the sustainable development to the country.

Research Problem/s, Objective/s

It is clear that academic stress has been recognized as a major obstacle for university students to reach the goals expected by society as well as the students themselves. Many incidents have been reported about students committing suicide due to examination stress in South Asian region (Saha, 2014). Also, a considerable number of dropouts is reported every year due to academic stress. Thus, it is necessary to pay more attention to the academic stress of the students if we want to create high quality graduates with good mental fitness. The main objective of this study is to identify the factors causing academic stress of undergraduates at the University of Sri Jayewardenepura.

Materials and Methods

This study was carried out with students of three faculties; Faculty of Management Studies and Commerce, Faculty of Humanities and Social Science and Faculty of Applied Sciences of the University of Sri Jayewardenepura. The sample size was 358 and stratified random sampling method was employed to select the participants. The data collection was done via a Google Form and the stress level was computed using composite index. KMO and Bartlet and konbranch alpha techniques were used to test reliability and validity of the questionnaire. Initially ANOVA was utilized to identify the significant factors which affect academic stress of undergraduates. Multiple linear regression analysis was carried out to measure the stress level of the students with respect to the significant factors which were considered for this study.

Results and Discussion

Out of ten factors considered, five factors did not significantly contribute to academic stress. These factors were gender, age of the undergraduate, level of income, faculty of the students and whether the students were employed in part time jobs. This implies that the academic stress may occur in a person irrespective of the above-mentioned factors. Of those considered factors, the strengthen of relationship between friends, family involvement for the academic works, relationship between lecturers and the students, satisfaction towards university administration system and satisfaction towards learning environment were given significant contribution for the academic stress. Based on the result of multiple regression analysis, it was revealed that the satisfaction of learning environment is the highest contribution factor

for academic stress. All the significant factors are inversely proportional to stress level. The result of the regression analysis is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Result of Regression Analysis

Dependent Variable: Stress – Index				
Method: Least Squares				
Included observations: 358				
Variable	**Coefficient**	**Std. Error**	**t-Statistic**	**Prob.**
FRIEND_INDEX	-0.395991	0.056545	-7.003061	0.0000
FAMILY_INDEX	-0.196432	0.052115	-3.769184	0.0002
LECTURE_INDEX	-0.319420	0.070567	-4.526449	0.0000
ADMINI_INDEX	-0.434476	0.055553	-7.820924	0.0000
LEARNING ENVI SATIS_ INDEX	-0.575805	0.065302	-8.817567	0.0000
C	146.4632	5.345438	27.39967	0.0000
R-squared	0.572980	Adjusted R-squared		0.566915

Conclusions and Recommendations

It can be concluded that students who have a poor satisfaction about the working environment of the university have a high level of stress when compared with the students who are satisfied with the environment of the university. According to the analysis, university administration also has a considerable impact on students' stress level. More programs should be introduced to enhance the interrelationship between undergraduates and lecturers. Also, it is suggested to develop programs to enhance the relationships among the academic staff, nonacademic staff and undergraduates too. Furthermore, it is proposed to consider more factors to identify the stress level of undergraduates who study online.

Keywords: *Academic Stress, interrelationships, Undergraduates, ANOVA*

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