

IDENTIFICATION OF STRESS SOURCES AND RELIEVING FACTORS AMONG UNDERGRADUATE MEDICAL STUDENTS AT RLKU MEDICAL COLLEGE, LAHORE

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Abstract

Study Design: The present study is cross sectional study. It was conducted on MBBS students of 1st year, 2nd year & 3rd year, at RLKU Medical College Lahore.

Objective: The main object of this study was to identify academic stress and relieving techniques.

Sample Size: Two hundred and twelve students of the three classes participated in this study willingly.

Methodology: The data was collected on a comprehensive questionnaire, designed for this study. The study was approved by the institutional ethical review board of Rashid Latif Khan University Medical College Lahore. The data was processed in SPSS version 25 for statistical analysis.

Results: In this study, 148 (69%) were female students and 53 (25%) were male. The students were highly dissatisfied (84%) with the current attendance policy. For understanding of lectures 38% remained neutral and 29% were unable to understand the lecture. For assessment in college academic year 37% were dissatisfied. For teachers dealing with students 74% reported good.

For relieving 73% suggested extracurricular activities 66% suggested for nutritious food in the college premises. Most of the students suggested a change in attendance policy and more vacations.

Conclusion: In this study attendance policy and assessment techniques were the major source of stress. For stress relieving, change in attendance policy & more extra circular activities were recommended.

Introduction:

Stress is a physical reaction of an individual to any external stimulus. Stress during medical training is increasingly being reported in published literature. Studies have shown

fairly high levels of stress such as symptoms of depression and even suicide among medical undergraduates [1]. In addition to stress the students' social, emotional, physical as well as family problems may affect their abilities [2].

Academic stress refers to the stress related to studies and work that goes beyond the capacity of the student and continuous stress leads to anxiety and depression [3]. College students are at a critical period where they will enter adulthood. They are expected to be the best members of the society. This period is a dangerous period of time when young people experience self-organization and training. For them, stress mainly comes from academic, interpersonal relations, and life changes. The high prevalence of depression disorder in Pakistani males and females is 25.5% and 57.5% respectively [4]. Such stress may cause psychological, physical, and behavioral problems. The number of suicide cases is the highest among medical college/university students and female students to a much larger proportion [5].

Objectives:

The main objective of this study is to identify the academic stresses and their relieving factors among undergraduate medical students.

To compare the severity of stress based on gender among undergraduate medical students.

To determine the methods of relieving stress for undergraduate medical students

Material and Methods:

Study Setting: The study was done on 1st Year, 2nd year, and 3rd year MBBS Students of RLKU Medical College

Study Duration: The study was done from January 24 – October 2025.

Study Design: A cross sectional study

Sample Size: All the students enrolled in first-year, 2nd year, and 3rd year MBBS at RLKU Medical College were considered a relevant population for our study.

Sampling Technique: Data was collected from all 1st year MBBS students using a comprehensive approach.

Data Collection Procedure: After obtaining ethical approval from the Institutional Board of Review (IRB) of RLKU Medical College, informed written consent was sought from each participant before collection of data. The 5 students team was recruited before starting the study. The researchers were trained before data collection. The data was collected using a structured questionnaire, adapted from a similar previous study. The questionnaire was uploaded in the form of Google form. The team was briefed and trained on how to fill the proforma. The Google form was shared in the official group of the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd year MBBS classes. Each member of the team was assigned 50 students to fill out the proforma. The individual member visited every student to fill out the proforma without disclosing the person filling it. The respondent was supposed to answer every question whether applicable or not. The questionnaire consisted of three sections: Demographic information, Sources of stress and Relieving

factors. The research supervisor supervised the data collection process.

Data Analysis Plan: After all proformas were filled the data was processed in SPSS Version 25, frequency and percentage was reported. Stratification was done for effect modifiers/confounders like Age, Gender, Residence and parent's education, and a post-stratification Chi-Square test was applied, keeping the P value at $P < 0.005$.

Ethical Consideration: Ethical approval was obtained from the IRB of RLKU Medical College. Before the commencement of the study, informed consent was obtained from all participants. Participation in the study was voluntary, and students could withdraw at any point without providing a reason. The confidentiality of the participant was strictly maintained, and the study didn't include any identifiable information.

Results

Variable	Category	Count (%)
Age	Over 20 Y	123 (58.02%)
	Under 20 Y	85 (40.09%)
	Missing	4 (1.89%)
Gender	Female	148 (69.18%)
	Male	53 (25%)
	Preferred Not to Say	5 (2.36%)

	Missing	6 (2.83%)
Residence	Day Scholar	110 (51.89%)
	Hostelite	97 (45.75%)
	Missing	5 (2.36%)

Table 1: Demographic characteristics

Table 1 shows demographic characteristics of study participants. In the age division most of the students were above 20 years. In gender distribution, one hundred and forty-eight (69.18%) were female students while fifty-three (25%) were Male. In the residential status of participants, 52% were day scholars.

Source	Response	Count (%)
Attendance Policy	Dissatisfied	178 (83.96%)
	Neutral	13 (6.13%)
	No Response	12 (5.66%)
	Satisfied	9 (4.24%)
Understand Lecture	Neutral	80 (37.74%)
	Unlikely	62 (29.4%)
	Likely	60 (28.30%)
	No Response	10 (4.71%)
Assessment Satisfied	Dissatisfied	79 (37.26%)
	Satisfied	75 (35.37%)

Teacher Dealing	Neutral	53 (25%)
	No Response	5 (2.35%)
	Good	156 (73.58%)
	Poor	52 (24.52%)
	No Response	4 (1.88%)

Table 2: Frequency of key academic stress sources

Table 2 shows frequency of key academic stress sources. One hundred and seventy-eight (83.96%) were dissatisfied with the attendance policy required for appearing in professional examinations. For understanding lecture content sixty (28.30%) were satisfied while sixty-two (29.4%) were not satisfied. For assessment techniques during the academic year seventy-nine (37.26%) were dissatisfied while seventy-five (35.37%) were satisfied. Forever fifty-three (25%) remain neutral. For student teachers dealing in hundred and fifty-six (73.58%) reported good and fifty two (24.5%) mentioned poor dealing.

Factor	Response	Count (%)
Extracurricular Activities	Often	154 (72.64%)
	Never	49 (23.11%)
	Missing	9 (4.24%)
Availability of Nutrition Food	Yes	140 (66.03%)
	Never	55 (25.94%)

Friendly Teacher	Missing	17 (8.01%)
	Neutral	84 (39.62%)
	Likely	79 (37.26%)
	Unlikely	38 (17.29%)
Change of Attendance Policy	Missing	11 (5.18%)
	Likely	172 (81.13%)
	Neutral	19 (8.96%)
	Unlikely	12 (5.66%)
Vocation	Missing	9 (4.2%)
	Yes	147 (69.33%)
	Neutral	26 (12.26%)
	No	25 (11.79%)
	Missing	14 (6.6%)

Table 1: Demographic profile of pregnant and non-pregnant women

Table 3 shows the relieving factors as suggested by the participants. One hundred and fifty four (72.64%) suggested "often" extra curricular activities. One hundred and forty (66%) suggested the availability of nutritious food in the college premises. Seventy nine (36.27%) reported friendly teacher relations as the stress reliever. One hundred seventy two (81%) suggested the change of attendance policy in practice for appearing in professional examinations. One hundred and forty seven

(69.33%) said more vacations as a stress relieving measure.

Discussion:

Recent research has revealed concern for sources of stress in students while studying in university/ institution. The present study was conducted to explore RLKU students facing stress along with various factors which can relieve the stress. The evidence in the present research supports that students experience various levels of stress [6]. The environment in the institution such as living situation, social support, teacher's behavior and campus resources are positively associated with stress among students.

A study by McLean et al. reported that students having low levels of support in the institution have higher levels of stress. In addition students who have supportive peers and teachers had low levels of stress [7].

Every student faces numerous changes during his/her academic journey and deals with stress differently. Students undergo various transitions during their academic journey such as frequent tests, viva and promotion to next class. Some students become disturbed because of this.

In the light of present study students suggested the ways in which stress can be decreased. Such as extra curricular activities, availability of modified nutritious foods, friendly teachers, modification of attendance policy and vacations. The American foundation for suicide prevention reported that students under stress have poor

relationship with other students, faculty members and have low grade averages.

The students under stress should be identified and the possible ways to relieve the stress [8]. In addition there is close relationship between stress and suicide which is frequently not reported. About two percent of traffic accident especially in young adolescents are suicide behavior [9].

STRESS management techniques are a useful way to help students cope with stress in the institutions. The strict policy should be modified and the behavior of faculty with students should be friendly [10].

Conclusion:

The students who join training for the medical profession are not mentally prepared for many subjects. They are being taught many subjects in the institution, preferably in a new integrated modular system. For this training students need to be regular in class lectures and review of these lectures at home. Regular assessment puts further mental load and students are stressed.

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