

# Factors Affecting On Examination Stress among Undergraduates: An Investigation from Eastern University

Ms. P. Luckmizankari

*Department of Management, Faculty of Commerce & Management, Eastern University, Sri Lanka*

*Abstract - The objective of this study is to discover the factors, which are creating examination stress among B.B.A undergraduates of Eastern University. This study was fully focused on Primary data, which was collected through self-designed questionnaire with five-point liker scale. The sample was comprised of 100 B.B.A Undergraduates from various Year of study spread across the Eastern University, Sri Lanka. The collected data has been examined and evaluated through Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 20.0. Through this survey, researcher concluded, "there is a high-level examination stress exist among B.B.A students". Female students are having high stress than male students. Among the factors, physical cognition has high contribution to examination stress, and depression is common consequence among most of the undergraduates who has examination stress than others.*

**Keyword— Examination Stress.**

## I. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays stress become a common issue which causes ill health to humans. Whatever they do, they will finally result by having stress. This is because of focusing on their affiliation needs while linking their busy life with jobs and studies. Stress is a real or perceived imbalance between environmental demands required for survival and an individual's capacity to adapt to these requirements (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984; Chrousos and Gold, 1992; Lovallo, 1997; Pearlin, Lieberman, Menaghan, and Mullen, 1981; Weiner, 1992). It creates psychological as well as physical sickness in one person's life as anxiety, depression, irritation, headache, neck pain, asthma, ulcer, etc. There are numbers of reasons available for someone feels stress in their life. those are may be afraid of missing loved one, family pressure, financial insufficient, work overload, etc. when concentrate on student's side, there is evidence that students do experience some stress (Aherne, 2001), while others found that students suffer significant levels of stress (Brown & Ralph, 1999). Their stressor may be huge; among those, examination is a common factor, which induces stress in students' lifespan.

Lee & Larson, (2000) and Lou & Chi, (2000) stated that examination stress is a student's interactions between environmental stressors, the student's cognitive appraisal of and coping with the academic-related stressors and psychological or physiological response to the stressors. It is a specific kind of disturbance and pressure that perceive by students during examination period. Many Researches revealed that, suffered from stress in examination days is a main reason for numerous emotional disorders that are basement to trauma disorder. This examination stress occurs due to several factors like, pressures from parents' side, concentrate on others' opinion, thinking about future growth etc. Fair brother & Warn, (2003) stated that, stress among students have been researched from several years, based on that researchers have found stressors as too many assignments, competitions with other students, failures and poor relationships with other students or lecturers.

Especially, Management students encounter too much pressure while studying in university, because management education is a base of enhancing the qualities and skills, which are relevant to cope with organizational environment. Therefore, management education agendas in university consist of varieties of curriculums, which seem to stressor to students. The medium of education also considers as a stress-creating factor of vast amount of students while consider the students of Eastern University. However, there is no field of researches carried out to investigate the actual factors, which induce stress among Management students in Eastern University.

Moreover, there are many studies were conducted to evaluate stress of students in universities, still there is also a lack of empirical work involve in investigate factors affecting the examination stress of students during the exam time. Thus, there has not been suitable argument about the methodological and statistical matters linked with them. Therefore, this study engaged to study the level of examination stress and factors of examination stress of B.B.A undergraduates of Eastern University.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

University students have many barriers to overcome in order to achieve their optimum result in university life. Among that, Examinations are considered as a factor, which creates stress in research as earlier, and it was just considered as one of the aspect in stressors, which create stress to students. Exam stress is a set of responses that include excessive worry, depression, nervousness and irrelevant thinking to a class of stimuli from an individual's experience of assessment and outcome (Gajalakshmi G & et al., 2012). The various causes that create examination as a stressor are categorized as follows;

### Time

Time considered as an important factor, which creates more anxiety and depression during the examination time. Duration of examination, urge to cover all syllabus quickly before examination, time interval between an examination to another and inadequate or vast revised periods come under time related factors, which produce stress during examination period. Based on Goodman (1993), time is considered as one of stressors which affecting the students.

### Medium

Medium can be defined as a language through the subjects and lectures can be delivered to students. Difference in medium between students' primary/intermediary education and higher education can be considered as a factor to induce stress. The effect of different medium can be severally affecting the students during their examination time.

### Physical environment

Physical environment of examination hall can be considered as a stress-inducing factor during the exam time. Noisy environment, damaged furniture, improper lighting of environment should create irritation and anger during the examination.

### Procedures in exam

Disturbance during examination also creates stress among students. Exams' procedures like ID card verification, signing in application form, long instruction in answer sheet to fill can trouble the students during exams, through this pressure will increase in examination hall.

### Personal cognition

Personal thoughts of students during the examination also create stress to them. Thought of failing in examination, comparing themselves with others, fear of losing grades can induce depression and pressures during examination. As stated by Goodman (1993), self-imposed stressors also affecting students like other stressors (e.g. financial, health-related and academic).

According to Abouserie, (1994), Students suffering stress at each semester with the extreme sources of stress from taking exams, struggle for grade in exam, and the large amount of syllabus to study in a small amount of time. Meanwhile, study of Erkutlu & Chafra (2006), revealed that, pressure to perform well in the examination and time allocated creates stressful situation among university students.

Zeidner (1987) found that multiple choice type exams are more favorable than essay type questions in examination, by both boys and girls. It revealed that the content of exam paper also a factors to create examination stress among students. On the research of Sources of Academic Stress – A Study on Management Students of Prabhakar P.N and Gowthami .C stated that, pressure to get good grades through the exam was the cause of worry for about 50% of the students whereas around 40% were worried about sitting for the exam. Thus, examinations are the ostensible stressors for management students. Takatsuji K & et al. (2008) reported on their research as, the time of examinations is an ideal factor which creates mental stress in students.

Researches of Manjula G and Vijaylaxmi A.H.M. (2012) and Edmunds (1984) they found, change in medium of instructions, test anxiety, fear of failure and competition for grades are the factors, which are responsible for examination stress and anxiety.

A study conducted by Saima R & Qadir B (2011) as factor affecting students' performance in examination at university level in Pakistan was explored mean score of factors such as environment of exam hall, shorter attendance in class, examination pattern, and behavior of invigilation staffs were more than 3. Therefore, research was concluded as psychological, physical and educational factors affect performance of university students in examination.

In this regard, this study tries to identify the factors, which create examination stress for management students during the examination period in Eastern University, Sri Lanka.

III. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What is the level of examination stress among the BBA undergraduates EUSL?
2. What factor contributes more on examination stress among undergraduates EUSL during the examination period?
3. What consequences are arising among undergraduates through of examination stress in EUSL?

IV. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The main objective of the study is,

1. To identify the level of examination stress among B.B.A undergraduates of EUSL
2. To find out the factor that contributes more on examination stress among undergraduates EUSL during the examination period.
3. To study the consequences of the stress among undergraduates of the EUSL

V. METHODOLOGY

A. Study Setting, Study Design

This research study was fully depended on Primary data. Primary data was collected through closed ended questionnaire.

B. Sample

The study population of this study is undergraduates of faculty of commerce & management of Eastern University from which about 100 undergraduates were selected as a sample. In this investigation Simple Random sampling procedure was used. Based on percentage of the total number of undergraduates in all four years, 100 individuals were randomly selected for data collection. However, only 91 questionnaires fully completed and considered for data analysis. Following equation was used for sample selection;

$$\text{Sample} = \frac{\text{No. of undergraduates in each year of study}}{\text{Total population}} \times \text{Total sample}$$

Sampling framework of 100-sample size is given as follows;

Table 1. Sampling Framework

No	Year of study	Population	Sample	Received questionnaire
1.	First year	104	27	27
2.	Second year	90	24	20
3.	Third year	99	26	21
4.	Fourth year	87	23	23
Total		380	100	91

(Source: Faculty of commerce & management students' details)

C. Data analysis

Univariate and bivariate technique was used for evaluating respondents' views. Descriptive statistics and correlation analysis were used for analysis of the summarized data.

VI. FINDINGS

Analysis of the collected data was carried out based on research objectives of this study under different topics as shown as follows:

A. Reliability test

Reliability test has been conducted through SPSS for measures the internal consistency of the instrument, based on the average inter-item correlation. The result of Cronbach's alpha test of each variable and results are shown in table II.

TABLE 2. Reliability test of each dimension

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.650	5

(Source: Survey data)

The Cronbach's alpha value above 0.60 is considered as good reliable instrument and high level of internal consistency of data and scale. Based on that, each five dimensions of Examination stress's results show good reliability, overall result shown as 0.650. Therefore, it is indicated measurement, which was used, in this study also good instrument.

B. Personnel information

This information is related with undergraduates' important personal detail such as gender, year of study, field of study, marital status and residence during the exam. There are following,

- Gender distribution: Out of 91 respondents, there were 54.9% of female and 45.1% of male, who participated and responded to the questionnaire.
- Distribution of year of study: Among the 91 respondents, 1st year students were in high number as 29.7%, followed by 4th year students as 25.3%, 3rd year students (23.1%) and 2nd year students (22%) respectively.
- Distribution of field of study: Out of 91 respondents, most of the respondents are following general course (80.2%), followed by marketing course (12.1%) and human resource management course (7.7%) respectively.
- Distribution of marital status: Among the 91 undergraduates, 98.9% were single and only 1.1% was married.
- Distribution related to residence type: Among 91 respondents, most of them were from hostel (54.9%), rest of them was from home (45.1%).

C. *Research information*

This information was related with variable of this research. For this study, Examination stress considered as variable and it has sub dimensions. The analysis was carried out based on research objectives.

To identify the level of examination stress among the BBA undergraduates EUSL

Table 3. Level of Examination Stress

	N	Mean	Std.
Examination stress	91	3.1707	.62995

(Source: Survey data)

Mean of Overall examination stress is 3.1707. It indicated that there is high level of examination stress exist among the undergraduates in EUSL. In addition, most of the respondents were expressed the general view regarding the variable of Examination stress (SD = 0.62995).

Table 4. Examination stress

Level	Frequency	Percentage
Low level	30	33
High level	61	67
Total	91	100

(Source: Survey data)

Out of 91 respondents, 67% of respondents indicated there was high-level examination stress, while only

about 33% of students was declared as low levels of examination stress exists in EUSL. Therefore, can concluded as most of the students at faculty of commerce & management in EUSL felt high level of examination stress.

- A. *To find out the contribution of factors to the stress among undergraduates EUSL during the examination period*

Table 5. Level of Dimensions of Examination Stress

	N	Mean	Std.
Time	91	3.1868	.69781
Medium	91	3.2088	1.01914
Physical environment	91	3.2088	1.03596
Procedure in exam	91	3.0256	1.09908
Personal cognition	91	3.2234	.97759

(Source: Survey data)

Examination stress includes five dimensions which are Time, Medium, Physical environment, Procedure in exam and Personal cognition. Among these, time, medium, physical environment and personal cognition have contributed to the very much in the Examination stress of EUSL undergraduates. They have the mean value 3.187, 3.209, 3.209 and 3.22. However, procedure in exam has only moderate level of contribution (3.026) and personal cognition has highest level of contribution in examination stress of undergraduates compared to other dimensions.

- B. *To study the consequences of the examination stress among undergraduates of the EUSL*

C.

Table 6. Frequency Distribution of Consequences of Examination Stress

	Yes		No		Total	
	Fr.	%	Fr.	%	Fr.	%
Depression	62	68.1%	29	31.9%	91	100%
Ulcer/Gastric	44	48.4%	47	51.6%	91	100%
Anxiety	37	40.7%	54	59.3%	91	100%
B.P	22	24.2%	69	75.8%	91	100%

(Source: Survey data)

There were four consequences of examination stress considered in this study. Among that, most of the respondents revealed that they have depression during the exams (68.1%), followed by Ulcer/Gastric (48.4%) and Anxiety (40.7%). However, only 24.2% of

undergraduates revealed that they have blood pressure (B.P) during the examinations.

*D. Level of Examination stress among gender*

Table 7. Gender \* Level of examination stress

		High level		Low level		Total
		Fr.	%	Fr.	%	
Gender	Male	25	27.5%	16	17.5%	41
	Female	36	39.6%	14	15.4%	50
Total		61	67%	30	33%	91

(Source: Survey data)

Out of 91 respondents, 67% of the undergraduates are facing higher level of examination stress, among that, female students are highly suffering examination stress (39.6%) than male students (27.5%) and only 33% of undergraduates have lower level of examination stress. Among that, 17.5% of males and 15.4% are females.

*E. Year of study wise level of examination stress*

Table 8. Year of study \* Level of examination stress

		High level		Low level		Total
		Fr.	%	Fr.	%	
Year of study	1 <sup>st</sup> year	17	18.7%	10	11%	27
	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	12	13.2%	8	8.8%	20
	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	14	15.4%	7	7.7%	21
	4 <sup>th</sup> year	18	19.8%	5	5.5%	23
	Total	61	67%	30	33%	91

(Source: Survey data)

Out of 91 respondents, 67% of the undergraduates are facing higher level of examination stress, among that, 4<sup>th</sup> year students are highly facing examination stress (19.8%) followed by 1<sup>st</sup> year (18.7%), 3<sup>rd</sup> year students (15.4%) and 2<sup>nd</sup> year students (13.2%)

respectively. Only 33% of undergraduates have lower level of examination stress.

*F. Level of examination stress based on residence during exams.*

Out of 91 respondents, 50 students are staying in hostel during the exams among that 37.4% of students facing high level of stress. And 41 students are coming from

home during exams. Among them 29.7% of students are suffering from examination stress.

TABLE 9. Residence during the exams \* Level of examination stress

		High level		Low level		Total
		Fr.	%	Fr.	%	
Residence during exams	Home	27	29.7%	14	15.4%	41
	Hostel	34	37.4%	16	17.6%	50
	Total	61	67%	30	33%	91

(Source: Survey data)

*G. Level of examination stress based on field of study*

TABLE 10. Field of study \* Level of examination stress

		High level		Low level		Total
		Fr.	%	Fr.	%	
Field of study	HR	7	7.7%	0	0%	7
	Mkting	6	6.6%	5	5.5%	11
	General	48	52.7%	25	27.5%	73
	Total	61	67%	30	33%	91

(Source: Survey data)

Out of 91 undergraduates, 73 students are following general course, among that 52.7% are having higher level of examination stress. 11 students are following Marketing course, among that 6.6% of students are having higher level of examination stress. And only 7 students are following human resource (HR) course, all of them are having higher level of examination stress.

VII. CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis, research was concluded that Eastern university's undergraduates have higher level of examination stress. Among the dimensions of examination stress, personal cognition has the highest level to contribution on examination stress. However, procedures in exams have only moderate level to contribution on examination stress among undergraduates.

When concentrate on consequences of examination stress most of the undergraduates are suffering from depression through examination. Follow by, ulcer/gastric and anxiety. However, less numbers of

students are suffering from blood pressure compared to other diseases.

Among all respondents, 67% of students are having high level of examination stress. 33% of the students are having low level of examination stress. Further, among 41 male students 27.5% of them are facing high level examination stress and 17.5% of them having low level of stress. And among 50 female students 39.6% of female students are having higher examination stress and only 15.4% of them having low level of examination stress. It is seen that compared to males, female students having more worries regarding examination and they feel more stress.

Students of different year of study have different stress level in EUSL. There are 19.8% of 4<sup>th</sup> year students are facing high level stress. It is because of, they are in their latter part of their university life, they have higher level of pressure on their examination results and they have lots of other academic works like internship and final thesis works. Therefore, they definitely have higher stress than other years of students. And 18.7% of 1<sup>st</sup> year of students having high level stress. Because, they are fresher to university activities. Some may have language barriers and most of them are facing new kind of procedures and function during the examination. Further 11% of them are having low level stress. Because, they never worry about their failures at earlier stage and they may consider, 1<sup>st</sup> year examination is not hugely impact on their class or in final grade. However, 2<sup>nd</sup> year and 3<sup>rd</sup> year of students are having 13.2% and 15.4% of higher level of examination stress respectively.

Residence during examination also has some impact on examination stress of EUSL undergraduate. Mostly, students who are from hostel (37.5%) are having high level of exam stress compare to those who are from home (37.4%). This may occur because, the students who are from hostel missed attachment of family and support from family. Moreover, comparing among other students in hostel will increase their pressure in examination. Therefore, it leads to higher examination stress than the students who are from home.

When concentrate the field of study, the students who follows human resource management (HRM) course, all they have higher level of stress only. Heavy content of syllabus and many notes related subjects in HRM may induce higher stress among students. Marketing students are having 6.6% of high level stress 52.7% of students who follows general course are having high level of stress.

Based on this research, the researcher can conclude that undergraduates of EUSL are having high level of stress in examination. Among that, female students are facing high level of stress compared with male students. Among the five factors, which are considered in examination, Personal cognition, Physical environment, Medium and Time factors are highly affecting the examination stress. The factor, Procedure in exam is having moderate level affection in examination stress. Moreover, students who have examination stress, they are hugely affected by depression. However, least of them are having blood pressure.

#### REFERENCES

- [1] Abouserie, R. (1994). Sources and levels of stress in relation to locus of control and self-esteem in university students. *Educational Psychology*, 14(3), pp. 323-330.
- [2] Aherne, D. (2001). Understanding student stress: a qualitative approach. *The Irish Journal of Psychology*, 22(3/4), pp. 176-187.
- [3] Brown, M. & Ralph, S. (1999). Using the DYSA programme to reduce stress and anxiety in first year university students. *Pastoral Care*, 17(3), pp. 8-13.
- [4] Chrousos, G. P. & Gold, P. W. (1992). The concepts of stress and stress system disorders: overview of physical and behavioral homeostasis. *JAMA*, 268(2), pp 267.
- [5] Edmunds, G. J. (1984). Needs assessment strategy for black students: An examination of stressors and program implications. *Journal of Non- White Concerns in Personnel & Guidance*, 12, pp. 48-56.
- [6] Erkutlu, H. V. & Chafra, J. (2006). Relationship between leadership power bases and job stress of subordinates: example from boutique hotels, *Manage. Res. News* 29(5) pp. 285-297.
- [7] Fairbrother, K. & Warn, J. (2003). Workplace dimensions, stress & job satisfaction. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 18 (1), pp. 8-21.
- [8] Gajalakshmi, V., Whitlock, G. & Peto, R. (2012). Social inequalities, tobacco chewing, and cancer mortality in south India: a case control analysis of 2580 cancer deaths among non-smoking non-drinkers. *Cancer Causes Control*, 23(1), pp. 91-8.
- [9] Goodman, E. D. (1993). How to handle the stress of being a student?. *Imprint*, 40(2), pp. 40-43.
- [10] Lazarus, R. S. & Folkman, S. (1984). *Stress. Appraisal and Coping*. New York: Springer.
- [11] Lee, M. & Larson, R. (2000). The Korean "Examination Hell": Long hours of studying, distress and depression. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 29(2), pp. 249-271.

- [12] Lou, W. & Chi, I. (2000). The stressors and psychological well-being of senior secondary school students. *Psychological Science China*, 23(2), pp. 156–159.
- [13] Lovallo, W.R. (1997). Stress and health: Biological and psychological interactions. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- [14] Manjula, G. and Vijaylaxmi, A.H.M. (2012). Stressors of academic stress- A study on pre university students, *India J. Sci. Res*, 3(1), pp. 171-175.
- [15] Pearlin, Leonard, I., Morton, A. Lieberman, Elizabeth, G. Menaghan, & Joseph, T. M. (1981). “The Stress Process.” *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 22(4), pp. 337–56.
- [16] Prabhakar, P. N. and Gowthami, C. (2011). Sources of Academic Stress - a study of management students. *Journal of Management Science*, 1(2), pp. 31-34.
- [17] Saima, R. & Qadir, B. (2011). A study of factors affecting students’ performance in examination at university level. *Procedia- social and behavioral science*, 15, pp. 2042-2047.
- [18] Takatsuji, K., Sugimoto, Y., Ishizaki, S., Ozaki, Y., Matsuyama, E. & Yamaguchi, Y. (2008). The effects of examination stress on salivary cortisol, immunoglobulin A, and chromogranin A in nursing students. *Biomed Res*, 29(4), pp. 221–4.
- [19] Weiner, B. (1992). *Human Motivation: Metaphors, Theories, and Research*, Sage, Newbury Park, CA.
- [20] Zeidner, M. (1987). Essay versus multiple-choice type classroom exams: the student's perspective. *Journal of Educational Research*, 80 (6), pp. 352-358.