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ANUBHAV: A stress management service for the students

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Abstract

Growing Indian economy creates extensive opportunities for students & young people to develop a prosperous career. But the opportunities are insignificant in compared to the population. This mismatch causes academic stress for ensuring success, develops the fear of failure and anxiety towards the evaluation system. Stress, anxiety, fear harms the mental health of the students & young adults and decrease the efficiency level. The study tries to bridge the cause of stress to the level of stress and further develop a model that can help institutions to manage the stress of the students and council them to develop self-esteem; in order to survive in the competitive market. The study was conducted taking students sample from Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Petroleum Technology and mapping the associations between dependent and independent variable. The model is named "ANUBHAV" that means "the feeling" because the motive of the study is to design a "helping hand" which is sympathetic towards the students' feeling.

Keywords: stress, stress management service, effective model

1. Introduction

India, the second largest country in terms of population, has witnessed significant growth in the youth segment which is considered as an essential driving force for social change and economic development, since the last thirty years. National Youth policy, 2014, defines "youth" as the person belongs to the age group of 15-29 and this segment comprises 27% of the total population (2011 population data) (National youth policy, 2014) ^[1] and expects this number will touch 34% by 2020 (MOSPI, 2017) ^[2]. The country has a resourceful, enthusiastic and energetic segment that contributes a noteworthy portion of the national labour force. But there are few emerging issues that cause serious disturbance for the said segment. Unemployment and underemployment have become a serious issue for the youth population and rate are gradually increasing from 10.08% (2013) to 10.54% (2017). This critical issue of unemployment & underemployment leads to the social pressure for the jobless young and the reflection of this pressure is visible in the education system (Mitra and Verick, 2013) ^[3]. This gradually rising concern provokes a competitive environment that results in parental pressure on the students for success and achievement. A research paper by Sibnath Deb, Esben Strodl & Jiandong Sun, reveals that 66% of students from Kolkata feel stress due to academic reason. The academic, parents' expectation and peer stress lead to the harmful effect on the mental health of the students and causes exam-anxiety (Deb, Strodl & Sun, 2015) ^[5]. Gradually developing mental stress and anxiety is one of the dominant causes of youth suicide in India and as per 2015 report, 6.7% of the suicide victim in India is youth¹. The mental health crisis is mainly inflated due to the absence of adequate mental healthcare infrastructure and lack of psychologist, social worker (Kumar & Chandra, 2018) ^[6]. In this paper, our focus is to find the attributes that will help to develop a stress management service for youth & students and we named this model "ANUBHAV (the feeling)".

2. Literature Review

Hans Selye, "father of the stress" defined "stress" as non-specific response of the body

¹<http://ncrb.gov.in/StatPublications/ADSI/ADSI2015/chapter-2%20suicides-v1.pdf>

to any demand. Selye argued that stress cannot be avoided and complete freedom from the stress is only possible after death. But there are several doubts over Hans's statement regarding stress. Behavioural science explains stress as the perception of threat that causes emotional tension, the anxiety of discomfort and difficulty in adjustment (Fink, 2017) [7]. Lazarus explained that people always evaluate its surrounding environment and this process is coined as an appraisal that is a cognitive mediator of stress reactions. So the change in the external environment will trigger psychological stress (Lazarus, 1993) [8]. Stress is generated from anxiety arising from external or internal environment-stressor. A stressor could be psychological, social pressure, financial crisis or future expectation (Oken Chamine, *et al.*, 2015) [9].

One of the major causes of stress among students is the academic pressure, workload, low motivation, uncertainty to get a job etc. Other stressors like poor relationship among peers, family problem and competition, are also a contributing factor for the academic stress. Institutions worldwide ignore the students' stress level because students belong to the system (academic curriculum) for a shorter period of time and the stress level of the students hardly bring any impact on the education structure (Agolla Ongori, 2009) [10].

There have been several research works that described the reason for the academic stress, but there are very few significant amounts of research works on developing stress management service. Yoga & humour could help to bring down stress. Yoga is an ancient exercise and it helps to reduce anxiety and develop effectiveness. Same as humour is effective to balance the physical & psychological stress level (Rizzolo Zipp, *et al.* 2009) [11]. Also, peer program, interactive session and access to multitude program & resources prove to be beneficial in case of stress management. Sports program and meditation like activity are also effective in order to cut down stress (Loi Spencer, *et al.* 2008) [12].

The primary objective of this paper is to develop a model that helps to connect the reason of stress to the stress level as well as design the blueprint of a service that will help to manage the stress of the students.

3. Background study

In order to develop the model, the different causes of stress among the students are needed to be discussed. Few stressors are identified on basis of small focus group study and the factors are:

- a. **Academic:** Academic stressors include the semester performance, class performance, assignments, preparation for competitive exam etc. Late night study & fear for the exam result in inadequate sleep and lack of sleep for a long period of time leads to stress.
- b. **Worried about the job:** Despite academic stressor, senior students & final year students are under the oppression about the career. These students face challenges during the placement period and uncertainty about the future causes mental stress for them.
- c. **Social life:** Other important external factors that work as a stressor, are the social life, virtual relation, social media chatting and peer relationship. Every student desires to have a friendly relation with his/her co-mates but in case this expectation is fulfilled causes stress.

- d. **Financial:** Family financial condition and burden of the student loan push students to work hard to secure career. Poor performance, unaccepted performance and failure develop fears in the students' mind and fear gradually flourish stress.

4. The objective of the research:

1. Determine the primary stressor among the students.
2. Design the attributes for developing the stress management service.
3. Link the attributes to the stressors.

5. Research methodology

A set of questionnaire was prepared and distributed among undergraduate and post-graduate students of Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Petroleum Technology, Jais, UP, in order to collect responses. A total number of responses gathered is one hundred and six and responses were collected in the printed format instead of Google form so that students could devote a significant amount of time before answering.

Tool Used: For the purpose of analysis, SPSS is used.

6. Research findings and discussion

Perceived stress scale (PSS) was used to measure the stress level and the reason behind choosing this instrument is the simple nature of the questions. The questions of PSS are about the respondents' thought & feeling in the previous month and the questions are free from subject specificity.

a. Demographic Variables

Table 1: Age distribution

Age group	Number	Percentage (%)
18-20	30	28.3
21-24	52	49.1
25-28	18	17.0
>28	6	5.6

Table 2: Discipline distribution

Discipline	Number	Percentage (%)
Under-graduate	50	47.16
Post-graduate	56	52.84

Table 3: Financial status distribution.

Financial status	Number	Percentage (%)
Low	33	31.1
Medium	62	58.4
High	11	10.5

b. Analysis: The cause of stress

Few factors are assumed to be the cause of stress and the factors are "sleeping time", "financial status", "academics", "worried about job", "personal & social life", "family pressure". Among these factors "academics" & "worried about the job" are considered as professional cause and "family pressure" & "personal & social life" are considered as a personal cause. Then from PSS, the level of stress is measured. The distribution of stress is like:

Table 4: Distribution of stress level among students.

Stress level	Number	Percentage (%)
Low	12	11.3
Medium	69	65.1
High	25	23.6

Now, professional cause and personal cause are clubbed as the cause of stress. So, here, level of stress is the dependent variable and sleeping time, financial status, cause of stress are the independent variable. So, Pearson correlation test is

applied to test the correlation between the dependent variable and independent variable and the two-tailed significance level is 5%. The result shows that there is only a correlation between the cause of stress and stress level.

Table 5: Pearson correlation.

Stress level		Sleeping time	Cause of stress	Financial status
	Significance	.228	.049	.462
	Correlation	-0.118	.192	.072

Here, the objective is to map the cause of stress to the level of stress. Those who are in medium stress level feel stress mainly because of professional reason (63.8%) and students in high-stress level, they also feel stress for the same reason (64%). Out of the total population, 67.6% stated the stressor for them is the professional cause.

Table 6: Distribution of causes of stress with stress level population

Population distribution	Reason for stress		
	Professional (%)	Personal (%)	Both (%)
Medium	63.8	17.4	18.8
High	64	4	32
Total population	67.6	13.4	19

So far from the discussion, it is visible that professional reason the primary stressor for the students. One notable fact is that population belongs to medium stress level are not so

much affected by both of the reason; on the other hand, population belongs to high-stress level are significantly oppressed by both personal & professional reason.

c. Analysis: The service

The service model is designed to assist students who are under stress and guide them so that they can overcome the situation. The purpose of this service is to council students and by understanding their stressors, the suitable recommendation will be provided. Before elaboration the model further, the attitude of the population, belongs to different stress level, towards the service has to be described. The low-stress level is desperately eliminated because of the insufficient number of population. In order to judge the attitude towards the service, five questions were asked and five-point scale (5=strong agree, 1= strongly disagree) is used to measure the response.

Table 7: Distribution of the responses of the total population towards the service.

Question	5(%)	4(%)	3(%)	2(%)	1(%)
Interactive service will help to lower the stress.	18.9	44.3	28.3	5.7	2.8
Sharing problems with a friendly person is easier than sharing with family.	20.8	33.0	34.0	9.4	2.8
An online interactive service with stress and problem management will be helpful.	3.8	17.9	46.2	20.8	11.3
An offline interactive service with stress and problem management will be helpful.	11.3	43.4	26.4	15.1	3.8
Sharing a problem with same-sex person is easier than opposite-sex person.	10.4	19.8	33.0	18.9	17.9

Now, the population is classified into two group medium stress and high stress and the responses are observed. Both the groups have agreed that the interactive service is essential and they mostly preferred offline mode as the most appreciated way to manage stress. Also, both the group believe that sharing problem with a friendly person is easier than with family member. But when the population was asked “sharing problem with a same-sex person is easier

than opposite-sex person”, a mixed reaction is observed. Medium stressed population responded towards neutral whereas high stressed population responded towards disagreeing. The reason may be highly stressed population believes the problem could be solved by them and instead of sharing the problem; they focus on the “action-oriented “attitude.

Table 8: Distribution of the responses of the medium stressed population towards the service.

Question	5(%)	4(%)	3(%)	2(%)	1(%)
Interactive service will help to lower the stress.	20.3	46.4	29	1.4	2.9
Sharing problems with a friendly person is easier than sharing with family.	21.7	34.8	34.8	7.2	1.4
An online interactive service with stress and problem management will be helpful.	5.8	23.2	42.0	20.3	8.7
An offline interactive service with stress and problem management will be helpful.	13.9	44.9	29.0	10.1	2.9
Sharing a problem with same-sex person is easier than opposite-sex person.	11.6	17.4	37.7	17.4	15.9

Table 9: Distribution of the responses of the high stressed population towards the service

Question	5(%)	4(%)	3(%)	2(%)	1(%)
Interactive service will help to lower the stress.	16.0	36.0	28.0	16.0	4.0
Sharing problems with a friendly person is easier than sharing with family.	20.0	28.0	32.0	12.0	8.0
An online interactive service with stress and problem management will be helpful.	0.0	4.0	48.0	28.0	20.0
An offline interactive service with stress and problem management will be helpful.	4.0	36.0	24.0	28.0	8.0
Sharing a problem with same sex-person is easier than opposite-sex person.	4.0	24.0	24.0	20.0	28.0

The average responses of the medium stressed level, high stressed level and total population are as follow,

Table 10: Mean & Std. deviation of the responses towards the service

Population	Mean	Std. deviation
Medium	3.3826	.57
High	2.9520	.68
Total population	3.2830	.62

7. The model design

The above analysis projects the attribute of the service that will help to develop a model that will be effective to

develop an advisory body for stress management among the students.

So, the attributes the model will follow:

1. The mode of service should be offline. (online option should be there if anyone desires for that)
2. The psychologist/ social worker/ student councillor should maintain a friendly attitude.
3. The student should be given the right to choose the councillor (based on gender).

At the inception of the process, the stress level should be measured using PSS questionnaires and the perceived reason for stress should be asked to the students.

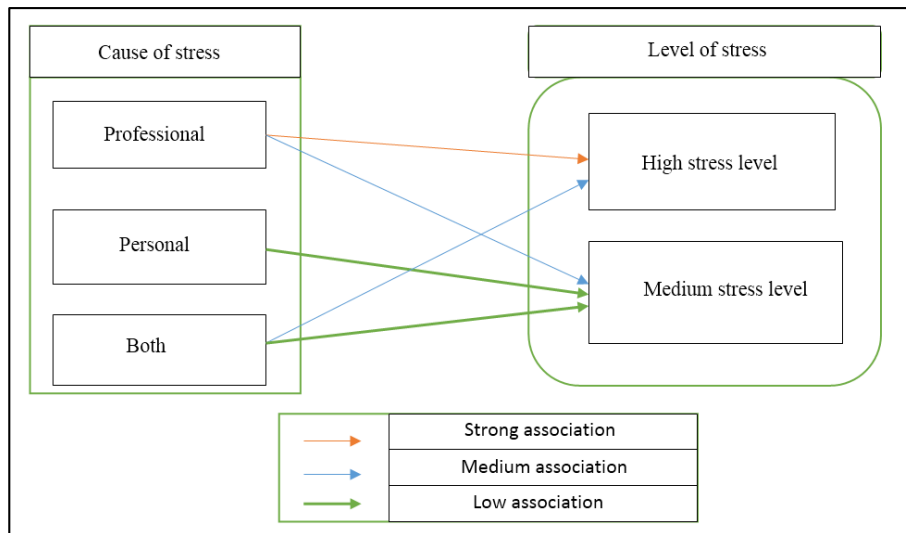


Fig 1: Association line between stress level and the cause.

The student who is under stress, will opt for the service and then his/her stress level and perceived the reason for stress are recorded. Once this step is successfully accomplished,

the student will interact with the respected councillor. The councillor will judge the student on basis of his/her expertise and historical data.

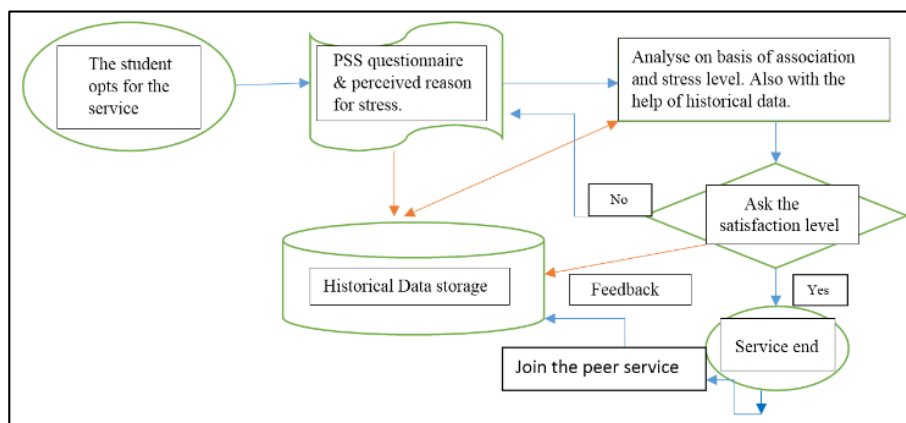


Fig 2: Flowchart diagram of the service.

At the end of the service, the feedback and responses will be gathered for future evaluation.

8. Discussion & Conclusion

The model is named “ANUBHAV” which means “the feeling”. The model is named such because the objective of the model is to understand and feel the students’ need, their mental health and stress level and to provide flexibility to the pupils and a comfortable atmosphere so they can express themselves very easily.

- It is observed that the level of stress is medium for a maximum number of students and this signifies that academic stress is not so intense. Research work of Smith *et al.* also support this fact. He explained that moderate stress level is acceptable in student life and it boosts students to act properly (Smith McCullough, *et al.* 2003) [13]. Marwan Zaid explained that major stressors are the concern about failure in career and academic punishment.

- The gradually rising fear causes stress and anxiety and this ends up in some wrong deed. Physical disorder, sleeping problem, and low self-esteem is the primary symbol of stress. Identification of stress at the initial level is essential and by developing self-esteem and the sense of self-efficacy could be helpful for managing stress (Saleh Camart, *et al.* 2017) ^[15].
- Our research model helps the institution to connect students with the councillor/ psychologist in a very simple way. The motive of this research work is to encourage Indian institutes to focus on the students' mental health and distribute academic stress accordingly. At the same time, the fear of failure could be managed by providing the necessary support and alternative career options.

9. Limitation of the study

The limitation of the study is the less number of the sample and elimination the gender group as a factor. There is a scope of further study by introducing a control variable and measuring the effective stress level. Data derived from the use of the control variable, the proposed model can be upgraded.

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