

“SURVEY: ACADEMIC STRESS, SYMPTOMS AND FACTORS CAUSING IT. GENDER DIFFERENCES IN STRESS COPING MECHANISMS AMONG MEDICAL STUDENTS”

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Abstract: This study aims to assess how and why academic stress prevails and affects medical students; and the ways by which male and female medical students differ in the ways they cope with stress, especially in the demanding field of medical education. It seeks to understand whether gender influences the strategies students use, to manage their stress and how these differences affect their mental and physical well-being.

Keywords: Stress, Stress factors, Stress in medical students, Gender differences, academic stress, medical students, stress coping mechanisms, gender differences in stress coping mechanisms, stress management

“So‘rovnoma: Akademik stress, uning alomatlari va sabablari. Tibbiyot talabalarida stressni english mexanizmlaridagi gender farqlari”

Annotatsiya: Ushbu tadqiqot akademik stressning qanday va nima uchun ustunligi va tibbiyot talabalariga ta’sirini baholashga qaratilgan. Shuningdek, erkak va ayol tibbiyot talabarlari stress bilan kurashish usullarida, ayniqsa tibbiy ta’limning talabchan sohasida, qanday farq qilishi tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqot, gender talabalarning foydalanadigan strategiyalariga qanday ta’sir qilishini, ularning stressni boshqarish qobiliyatiga va bu farqlar ularning ruhiy va jismoniy farovonligiga qanday ta’sir qilishini tushunishga intiladi.

Kalit so’zlar: Stress, Stress omillari, Tibbiyot talabalaridagi stress, Gender farqlari, Akademik stress, Tibbiyot talabarlari, Stressga dosh berish mexanizmlari, Stressni boshqarishdagi gender farqlari

“Опрос: Академический стресс, его симптомы и причины. Гендерные различия в механизмах преодоления стресса среди студентов-медиков”

Аннотация: Цель данного исследования — оценить, как и почему академический стресс преобладает и влияет на студентов-медиков, а также как студенты-медики мужского и женского пола различаются в способах его преодоления, особенно в условиях высокой требовательности медицинского образования. Исследование направлено на понимание того, влияет ли пол на стратегии управления стрессом, используемые студентами, и как эти различия отражаются на их психическом и физическом благополучии.

Ключевые слова: стресс, факторы стресса, стресс у студентов-медиков, гендерные различия, академический стресс, студенты-медики, механизмы преодоления стресса, гендерные различия в механизмах преодоления стресса, управление стрессом.

INTRODUCTION:

When the body's natural stability is disturbed by external pressures or imbalances, stress results. Students frequently struggle with stress because of poor study techniques, restless nights before tests, and unhealthy eating habits during stressful times. Academic courses, especially in medical school, are a major source of stress. First-year medical students find this particularly difficult as they get used to the demanding requirements of medical school. Support from friends and family is crucial for stress management, as is taking part in hobbies or interests outside of work. Gender differences have a big impact on how people feel and respond to stress. The necessity to comprehend these differences is highlighted by the fact that men may cope differently from women, who may exhibit stress more through mental or physical symptoms.

Methodology:

Study design: A Google form was used for a cross-sectional survey of medical students from different academic years at Tashkent Medical Academy, Tashkent, Uzbekistan. The form was distributed via personal communications as well as social media sites like Instagram, Telegram, and WhatsApp.

Participants/Subject: The survey was completed by 115 medical students, 60 of whom were male and 55 of whom were female. Medical students between the ages of 17 and 25 who were enrolled in the Tashkent Medical Academy and gave their consent to participate were among the inclusion criteria.

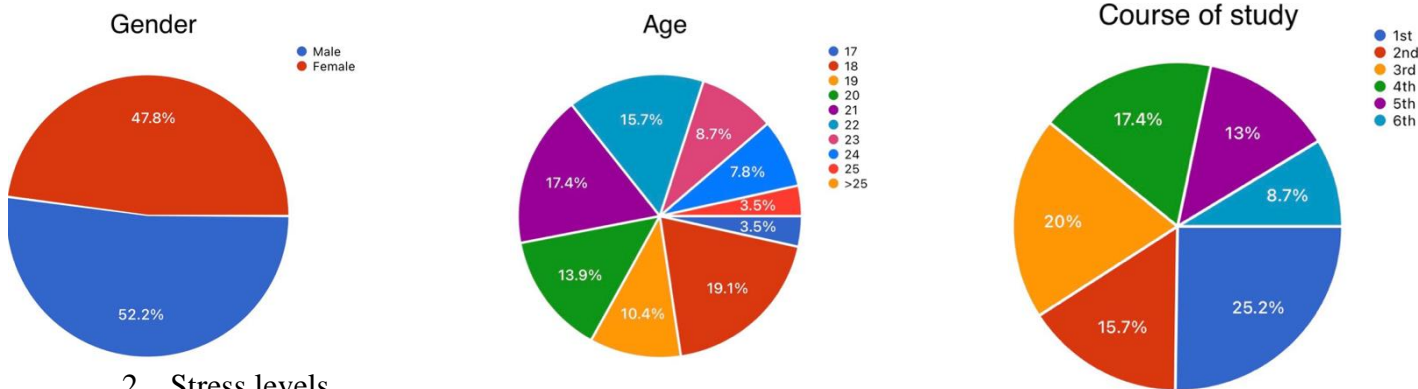
A systematic questionnaire with four sections was filled out by the participants:

1. Demographics (gender, age, and academic program)
2. Academic stress levels and contributing elements (self-reported stress levels and their causes)
3. Stress symptoms and coping strategies (choosing from a predetermined set of checkboxes)
4. Survey with a gender focus (influence of one's gender on the type of stress and the way of coping it)

RESULTS:

1. Demographics:

- Gender – 52.2% males (n=60) , 47.8% females (n=55) [total = 115 students participated]
- Age range – 17-25 (average age = 18.17)
- Course of study – 1st year 25.2% (n=29), 2nd year 15.7% (n=18), 3rd year 20% (n=23), 4th year 17.4% (n=20), 5th year 13% (n=15), 6th year 8.7% (n=10).

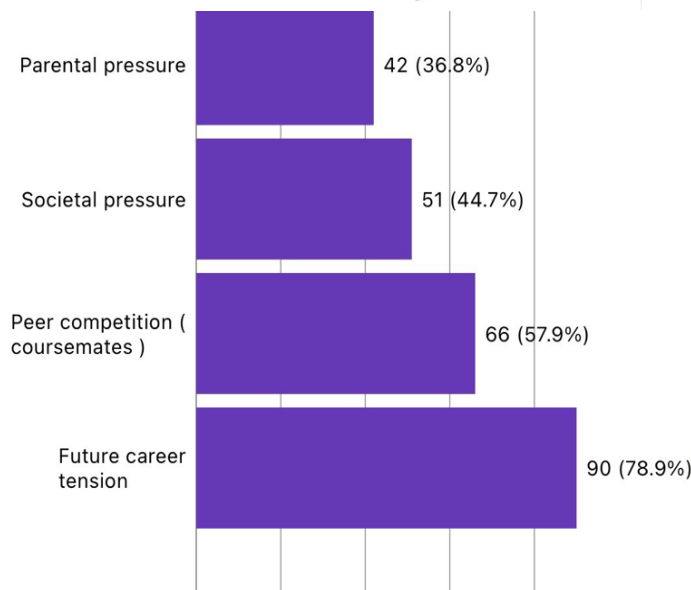


2. Stress levels

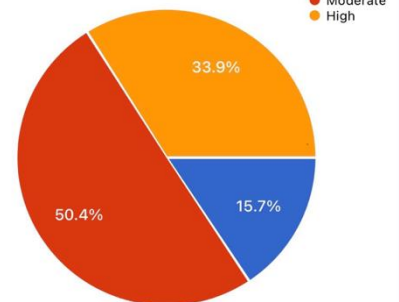
- 15.7% (n=18) reported low levels of stress
- 50.4% (n=58) reported moderate levels of stress
- 33.9% (n=39) reported high levels of stress out of which 43.5% (n=17) were females and 56.4% (n=22) were males
- The factor which played the maximum role in contributing to academic stress was found to be future career tension for the majority of students as compared to other factors such as parental, societal or peer pressure

Maximum students reported a self-study time of 2 hours (28.1% , n=32) , and a minority of the students reported time of self-study as less than 1 hour (8.8% , n=10) . There were also some

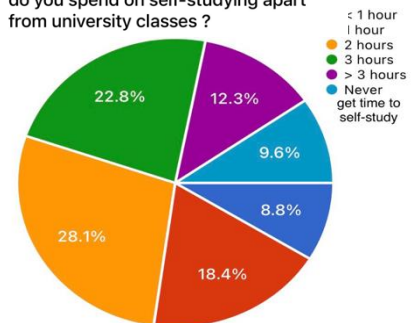
What factors play the most significant role in the academic stress you face?



How would you describe your overall academic stress level?



On average, how many hours per day do you spend on self-studying apart from university classes ?

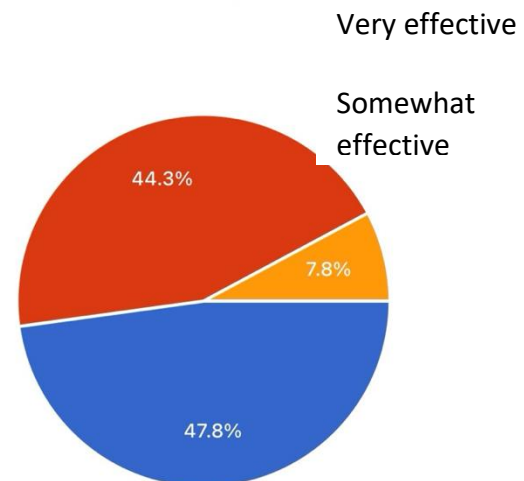
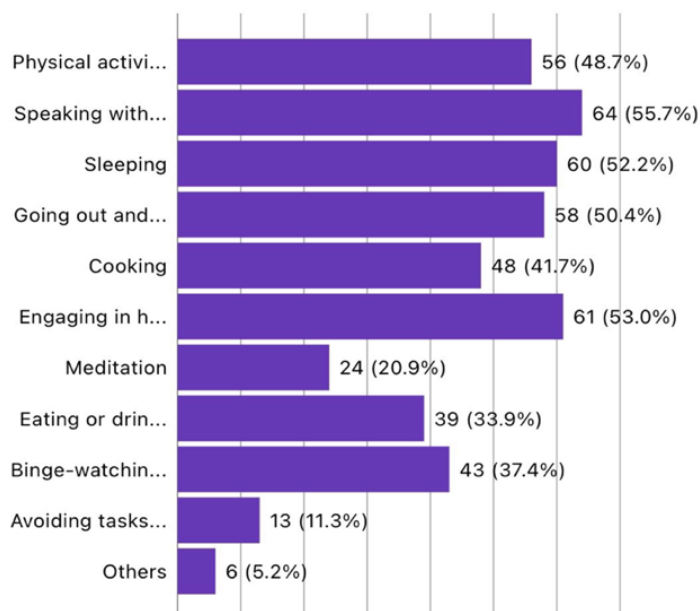


students (9.6%, n=11), who reported that they struggled to even find any time to self-study on some days.

3. Stress coping mechanisms:

How effective do you feel your coping mechanisms are , in managing your stress?

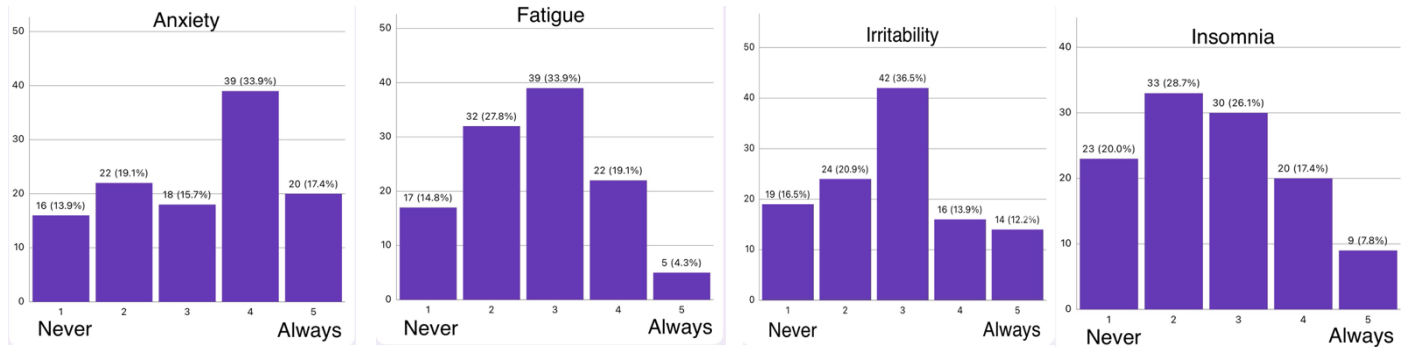
Which of the following strategies do you commonly use to cope with stress?
(Select all that apply)



The survey asked students to select their preferred stress coping mechanism from a list that included things like physical activity (gymming/exercise), speaking with friends and family, sleeping, going out and exploring, cooking, engaging in hobbies (music/art), meditation, eating or drinking as comfort, binge-watching movie shows, avoiding tasks and procrastination, and others.

- 47.8% of students (n=55) said these coping mechanisms were very effective in managing their stress, 44.3% (n=51) said they were moderately effective, and 7.8% (n=9) said they weren't.

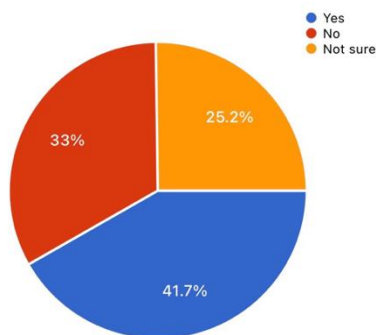
- Students scored the occurrence of typical stress symptoms, like anxiety, irritability, insomnia, and fatigue, on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 represents never and 5 represents always.



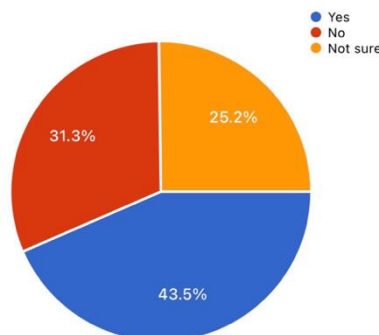
4. Gender-Specific survey:

43.5% of students (n=50) believed that their gender influenced the way they cope with their stress. 42.7% of students (n=48) believed their gender influences the type of stress they experience. 48.7% of students (n=56) didn't believe that if they were of the opposite gender, they could be able to cope with the stress better.

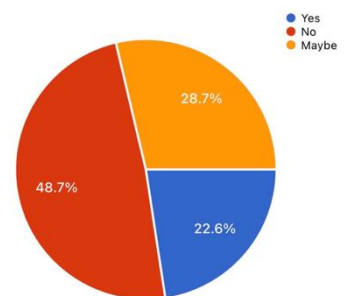
In your opinion, does your gender affect the types of stress you experience?



Do you feel that your gender influences the way you cope with stress?



Do you think that if you were of the opposite gender (hypothetically), you would be able to cope with stress better?



DISCUSSION:

- Majority of males have reported high levels of academic stress as compared to females.

- Some students reported struggling to even find any time to self-study on some days due to the busy schedule demanded in the medical field of education, resulting in rising stress.
- It was found that female students were observed to employ the emotion-focused coping dimension, which was supported in conversations with friends and family as well as in hobbies including cooking, music, and art. While male students used the self-distracting component more, they were more likely to sleep, binge-watch movies, go out and explore, and engage in physical activities like working out or going to the gym.
- Out of the stress symptoms, the most frequent occurrence was anxiety among medical students, followed by fatigue, then irritability and lastly insomnia. Anxiety was found to be more pronounced in females, insomnia was found to be higher in males, and fatigue and irritability showed equal prevalence.
- The findings confirm that gender plays a significant role in the type of stress students face, and the way they deal with it.

CONCLUSION:

By assessing the degree of academic stress and various coping mechanisms used by male and female medical students, this study contributes to the body of existing literature. The results of this study have offered useful information to lessen stress, with a focus on gender. University may place more focus on more effective stress management and adaptive sessions. This evidence can also be applied to the design of future research and potential gender-specific guidelines for medical students.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Given that both genders use different coping mechanisms and strategies to manage their stress, much thought must be given to how each gender will be able to independently acquire effective coping skills for the rest of their lives and manage stressful situations. Gender-sensitive workshops and academic counselling sessions should be conducted which may include training better stress management for both genders based on their specific preferences. Hobby classes should be made mandatory in universities especially for females to relieve their stress, and facilities for physical activity such as gym, exercise etc should be made available specially for males to cope with their academic stress. Separate attention should be given to better stress management based on gender differences.

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