

# IMPACT OF GENDER ON STRESS AMONG GRADUATE STUDENTS

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## ABSTRACT

*The aim of the present study was to investigate the differences on stress among graduate students. The random sampling method was used in this study. The total sample consisted of 240 subjects out of which 120 were boys and 120 were girls. Students were from the various colleges of M.K. Bhavnagar University. Gujarati version (Desai, M. D. & Parmar, J. M., 2014) of Students Stress Scale developed by Da Coste Leite and Israel (2011) was used to measure stress. The data were analyzed using t-test. The result showed that there is significant difference on stress among graduate students. Graduate girls have more stressed than graduate boys.*

**Keywords:** Stress, Gender

## Introduction

The term "stress" was first used by the endocrinologist **Hans Selye** in 1936 to identify physiological responses in laboratory animals. The origin of the word 'stress' originates from the Latin word "Stringere". Stress is a physical expression of our "Fight or Flight" survival mechanism. **Hans Selye (1956)** have defined stress as, "The nonspecific response of the body to any demand." According to **Richard S. Lazarus (1966)**, "Stress occurs when an individual perceives that the demands of an external situation are beyond his or her perceived ability to cope with them". According to **Baum A. (1990)**, "Stress is any uncomfortable emotional experience accompanied by predictable biochemical, physiological and behavioral changes." According to **Bernstein, D.A., Penner, L.A., Stewart, A.C., Roy, E.J. (2008)**, "Stress is viewed as a negative emotional, cognitive, behavioral and physiological process that occurs as a person tries to adjust to or deal with stressors". Thus, stress is a situation of frustration, conflict and pressure that can harm a person's physical and mental health. Stress is a condition of tension (mental or physical or both) which results in emotional loss and pain according to dictionary of psychology (**Lai, Chao, Chanf, & Chang, 1996**).

**Hans Selye (1976)** explained stress model based on physiology and psychobiology as General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS). His model states that an event that threatens an organism's well-being (a stressor) leads to a three-stage bodily response: alarm stage, resistance stage and exhaustion stage. There are different type of stress- acute stress, chronic stress, eustress and distress. Three types axial of stress are frustration, conflict and pressure. Sources of stress are including psychological stress sources, social stress sources and chronic stress sources. The effect of stress are psychological, physical, behavioral and social. **Lazarus and Folkman (1984)** suggested two types of coping responses of stress are emotion focused and problem focused.

**Petroff (2008)** stress had a negative impact on academic success among college students. Higher levels of stress among college students have been associated with a number of adverse effects such as increased risk of illness, poor sleep, disordered eating, increased utilization of health services and depression (**Brooks, Girgenti & Mills, 2009; Matheny, Ashby & Cupp, 2005; Osberg & Eggert, 2012; Roddenberry & Renk, 2010; Sawatzky, Ratner, Richardson, Washburn, Sudmant & Mirwaldt, 2012**). Stress associated with academic activities has been linked to various negative outcomes, such as poor health (**Greenberg, 1981**), depression (**Aldwin & Greenberger, 1987**), and poor academic performance (**Clark & Rieker, 1986; Linn & Zeppa, 1984**). Recent studies have begun to recognize the importance of gender's influence on stress and have consistently revealed that women report higher levels of chronic and daily stressors than men (**Hogan, Carlson, & Dua, 2002; Tamres, Janicki & Helgeson, 2002**).

## Objective

The objective of present research was to study the differences on stress between graduate boys and graduate girls.

## Hypotheses

There is no significant difference in mean scores of the stress among students with reference to gender (graduate boys/graduate girls).

## Research Paper

**Method****Sample:**

The sample consisted of 240 graduate students out of which 120 were boys and 120 were girls, selected from various colleges of M.K. Bhavnagar University. All the subjects were randomly selected keeping in view the control variables of the study.

**Instruments:****1. Personal Data Sheet:**

A personal data sheet developed by the investigator was used to collect information about gender (graduate boys and graduate girls) as well as to collect some other demographic information.

**2. Students Stress Scale:**

Gujarati version (Desai, M. D. & Parmar, J. M., 2014) of Students Stress Scale developed by **Da Coste Leite and Israel (2011)** was used to measure stress. The modified version of the Student Stress Scale is a 32 item scale and is made up of three subscales, namely: Academic demands (9 items), non-academic demands (10 items), and environmental demands (13 items). The scale has a five point frequency rating scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very much). The higher the score, the more obstacles students perceive. The Cronbach alpha coefficients for the subscales of academic demands, non-academic demands, and environmental demands were .87, .88, and .89 respectively (Da Coste Leite & Israel, 2011). In the current study, the Cronbach alpha coefficient for the Student Stress Scale was .88 while the Cronbach alpha coefficients for the subscales of the Student Stress Scale (academic demands, non-academic demands, and environmental demands) were .84, .79, and .88 respectively. According to **George and Mallery (2003)** an alpha value greater than .90 is excellent; an alpha greater than .80 is good; an alpha greater than .70 is acceptable; an alpha greater than .60 is questionable; an alpha greater than .50 is poor and finally, any value less than .50 is unacceptable. In the current study, the alpha values for the subscales of the Student Stress Scale as well as the scale as a whole ranged from acceptable to good.

**Procedure:**

The testing was done on a group of gender graduate boys and graduate girls. The whole procedure was explained to them clearly. Obtained data were analyzing using t-test for comparing graduate boys and graduate girls on stress.

**Result and Discussion**

The main objective of present study was to know the differences of gender on stress among graduate students. The t-test was used to find out whether gender (graduate boys/graduate girls) has an impact on stress. Significant difference was found between graduate boys and graduate girls on stress ( $t=3.26, p<0.01$ ).

**Table 1****Showing the Mean, SD and t-value of stress among graduate students**

Variable	N	Mean	SD	t
Graduate Boys	120	93.82	18.49	3.26**
Graduate Girls	120	101.58	18.39	

\*\* $p<0.01$

Results of the study showed a significant gender difference on stress among graduate students. Graduate girls have more stress than graduate boys. There is ample evidence for gender differences in response to stress. These findings are consistent with previous studies which revealed that women report higher levels of stress than men (Hogan, Carlson & Dua, 2002; Tamres, et al., 2002). Ng and Jeffrey (2003) who reported that females are more likely to be stressed than men. Women have been found to have more chronic stress than men (McDonough & Walters, 2001; Turner et al., 1995; Nolen-Hoeksema, Larson, & Grayson, 1999) and are exposed to more daily stress associated with their routine role functioning (Kessler & McLeod, 1984). Women are also more likely to report home and family life events as stressful (Oman & King, 2000) and stress related to gender caring roles (Lee, 1999, 2001; Walters, 1993). In addition, women experience gender-specific stressors such as gender violence and sexist discrimination, which are associated with women's physical and psychiatric events (Heim et al., 2000; Klonoff, Landrine, & Campbell, 2000; Koss, Koss, & Woodruff, 1991; Landrine, Klonoff, Gibbs, Manning, & Lund, 1995). Women also were more affected by the stress of those around them, as they tend to be more emotionally involved than men in social and family networks (Kessler & McLeod, 1984; Turner et al., 1995). Misra et al. (2000) found that university women reported higher levels of stress than university men for some stressors such as frustration, self-imposed stress, and pressure in relation to

academics. A similar study in Kuwait on stressors among medical students by **Badr and Hamoda (2005)** found that 67% of medical students had stress, with a significantly higher rate among females. **Dyson and Renk (2006)** however, found no gender differences in university students' reported stress levels for university and family stressors. The result is same as above researchers. Thus, we can say that there is significant gender difference was found on stress among graduate students.

## Conclusion

There is significant gender difference on stress between graduate boys and graduate girls. Graduate girls scored higher on stress than graduate boys.

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