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Degree of Stress among Chinese College Students Studying in South Korea: A Case of Business Department

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Abstract

There is a certain amount of pressure when students enter college from high school. These pressures may come from school, relationships, and future career pressures. In this study, 174 Chinese college students studied in South Korea in the field of Business completed 50 items questionnaires on the frequency of stress to assess their levels of physical, social, psychological, academic, and psychological stress. The results showed that most of the students' stress was in moderate level. In addition, the study showed no significant correlation between gender and CGPA and student stress.

Keywords:*Academic pressure, Chinese students, college students, Stress, South Korea*

Introduction

Stress is a condition that often occurs in our lives. It is reflected in different fields, and there is anxiety and stress regardless of age, education or economic status (Kitzrow,2003). In the campus environment, college students are also faced with many environmental adaptation problems. While dealing with these problems, anxiety and stress are also generated, that may affect their learning and living standards. Stress is not always negative. A certain degree of stress will make college students more mature and self-reliant and motivate and enhance the academic task ability of college students. But on the other hand, stress also makes people grow. It can make college students more mature and independent and improve their learning ability (Nandamuri & Ch, 2007).

Korea has higher level of suicide rate among OECD nations. More importantly number of suicides is quite common among adolescents in South Korea (Lee Ji-Yong and Bae Sung-Min, 2015). According to Ho, et. al (2020) around 2 million Korean suffered from depression, out of which only 15% received medical treatment. Students in South Korea have higher suicidal rate than average due to high level of family pressure to be succeed academically, this puts students in stress and sleeping disorder too Ho, et. al (2020) [www.worldpopulationview.com]. Our current paper aim to explore stress level of Chinese students studying in South Korean universities at the department of Business. Earlier empirical studies found gender has influence on stress (Azila-gbettor et al.,2015), similar conclusion was drawn by Jogaratnam and Buchanan (2004). As per Jogaratnam and Buchanan

(2004) female students tend to have higher level of stress than male. Hence, present paper explores if that is true for Chinese studying in South Korea.

Literature Review

Compared with local college students, international students have lower academic stress and less response to stressors, besides Misra, R., & Castillo, L. G. (2004) also explained gender differences in stressors in their study. Modern college students often experience communication difficulties, mainly because of the language difference they do not understand how to communicate with others and communication skills. Country like South Korea mostly communicate in Korean language. Misirlis et. al. (2020) have also express the same concern in their paper. Some serious students will appear to be introvert and may not interact with others. Due to lack of interpersonal relationships and lack of friends, psychological emptiness and other problems are caused. These can irritate students and cause more serious psychological problems. Some students sacrificed principles in order to change this phenomenon. But after realizing the essence, the feeling of loneliness makes students feel psychologically biased (Yao Jia &He Wei 2016).Zhang Renwen's (2017) research shows that when stress is high, individuals will share more intimate information and have more intentional information disclosure on the network instead of confiding to others, thus relieving stress will increasing life satisfaction (Zhang Renwen, 2017).

In general, new students are not adapted to the new environment, not familiar with teacher student relationship, the new teaching methods, this confusion leads to psychological stress. Freshmen students with no prior international exposer struggle to adopt new language, food habit and social relation which could be one of the reasons of psychological problems (Shen Jinkun, 2016). Students emotional state of mind and academic performance could be shattered if the level of stress increase (Misra R. and Mckean, 2000)

The main stressors facing current college students come from academic pressure and employment pressure, and they vary from one major to another. Some college students have problems such as weaker ability to withstand stress, unhealthy decompression, weak psychological knowledge, and low participation in mental health education activities. Governments, families, schools, and college students must act to ease the psychological pressure of college students. Promote their healthy development of mind and body (Chen et al, 2018).

Research Questions：

1.What areas of student pressure are mainly reflected in?

2.How to ease the pressure of college students?

3.Is there a relationship between students’ gender and stress level?

4.Is there a relationship between student CGPA and stress level?

Methodology

Participants

To perform a descript analysis, authors have collected firsthand data. To conduct a survey a 50 items about stress divided into academic(10 items), physiological(10 items), social(10 items), physiological (10 items), social (10 items), psychological (10 items), and environmental(10 items) questionnaire was distributed among Chinese students studying at the department of Business in Keimyung University via online. A total of 174 Chinese students studying at Keimyung University of South Korea participated in this study. Out of which 96(55%) of them were female, and 78(45%) of them were male. Participants were categorized into three groups based on their GPA (Grade Point Average). A total of 59 (34%) students were in higher GPA group, 100(57%) students were in average performing and 15 (9%) were lower.

Data analyses

First, collected data were coded into EXCEL and imported to SPSS 25 for analysis. Data were displayed using cross-tabulation. Frequency distribution, mean and standard division were used to analyze and summarize data. To know if there was any effect of the degree of stress on academic performance (GPA) and gender, a chi-squire test was performed.

Results

Variables and descriptive statistics

Following Table 1 shows the variables and its mean value, standard deviation, and Cronbach's alpha of the study. The Cronbach's alpha value range from 0.91 to 0.96. The overall stress scale showed high internal consistency (α = 0.98).

Table 1. Summary of alpha values (α), Mean (M), and Standard Deviation (SD)

Components of stress	No. of items	Alpha(α)	M	SD
Academic	10	0.91	23.23	9.76
Physiological	10	0.92	20.48	9.93
Social	10	0.93	18.46	9.21
Environmental	10	0.94	20.89	10.37
Psychological	10	0.96	20.22	9.85
Overall	50	0.98	103.27	49.12

Table 2. Level of academic stress

Levels of academic stress	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative Percent
Lower	52	29.9	29.9	29.9
Moderate	81	46.5	46.5	76.4
Higher	41	23.6	23.6	100
Total	174	100	100	100

Academic stress

It can be seen from table 2 that most of the students are in a state of moderate pressure in study (46.5%). A small number of students are in a state of low (29.90) and high (23.60) levels of stress.

Table 3. Summary of the academic stressors

Academic stressors	Never (%)	Rarely (%)	Some-times (%)	Freq. (%)
1. College unfair grading system	24.14	32.18	33.91	9.77
2. Pressure in daily studying	12.64	27.59	41.38	18.39
3. Difficult to deal with academic	15.52	23.56	42.53	18.39
4. Depression due to low CGPA	40.23	28.16	25.29	6.32
5. Difficulty in studying for long hours	22.41	16.09	38.51	22.99
6. Too much academic workload	24.14	32.76	31.61	11.49
7. Inadequate educational facilities	30.46	32.76	25.29	11.49
8. Dissatisfaction with one's program	23.56	23.56	35.63	17.24
9. Lecturer and teaching ability to grasp the theme of the	39.08	37.36	18.39	5.17
10. Boringness in attending classes regularly	32.76	27.01	27.59	12.64

Table 3 shows the specific ratio of each factor of study stress. It can be seen that most of the students are often stressed because they cannot concentrate on their studies for a long time (item 5). There are also some students who are always under pressure because of daily study pressure (item 2) and difficulty in dealing with academic problems (item 3). On the contrary, the chart also shows that most students are not depress due to their low CGPA.

Physiological stress

As shown in table 4, most students are under low pressure (46.50%) in terms of physiological stress factors, followed by 30.50% and 23% in terms of medium pressure and high pressure. It can be seen that physiological factors have no great influence on Chinese students studying in Korea.

Table 4. Degree of physiological stress

Level of physiological stress	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative Percent
Lower	81	46.50	46.50	46.50
Moderate	53	30.50	30.50	77.00
Higher	40	23.00	23.00	100.00
Total	174	100.00	100.00	100.00

Table 5. Distribution of physiological stressors (for each item)

Physiological stressors	Never (%)	Rarely (%)	Sometimes (%)	Frequently (%)
1. Often have a headache	34.48	30.46	22.41	12.64
2. Gastrointestinal problem	29.31	26.44	24.71	19.54
3. sleep problem	30.46	26.44	22.41	20.69
4. Breathing problem	46.55	32.76	15.52	5.17
5. Increased heartbeat	45.98	31.61	16.67	5.75
6. poor appetite	34.48	32.76	22.41	10.34
7. Back pain	32.76	28.16	23.56	15.52
8. Unstable bodily temperature	50.00	33.33	12.64	4.02
9. Urinating	42.53	32.18	14.94	10.34
10. Tiresomeness	35.06	27.59	28.74	8.62

As shown in table 5, some students have greater pressure on gastrointestinal and sleep problems (item 2 and 3). The instability of body temperature does not cause stress to most students (item 8).

Social stressors

As it can be seen from table 6, only a small number of students were under high pressure due to the influence of social factors (8.6%), while most students have no influence.

Table 6. Degree of social stressors

Levels of social	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative Percent
Lower	96	55.20	55.20	55.20
Moderate	63	36.20	36.20	91.40
Higher	15	8.60	8.60	100.00
Total	174	100.00	100.00	100.00

Table 7. Summary of the degree of social stressors

Social stressors	Never (%)	Rarely (%)	Some-times (%)	Freq. (%)
1. Lack of communication with family	61.49	17.82	16.09	4.60
2. Often alone	50.00	24.14	17.82	8.05
3. Lack of communication with others	48.85	29.31	16.09	5.75
4. Conflict with others	52.87	31.03	11.49	4.60
5. Preferring to be alone	32.76	20.69	27.01	19.54
6. Insisting others on my opinion	35.06	32.18	26.44	6.32
7. Difficulty in dealing with others	48.85	31.03	13.79	6.32
8. When people try to provoke me, I deal with them nervously	36.78	31.03	26.44	5.75
9. Poor conflict resolution skill	38.51	33.33	20.69	7.47
10. Getting into conflict with teachers	71.26	20.69	6.32	1.72

Table 7 depicts the frequency distribution of social stressors. In the ratio of high stress levels, liking to be alone had the greatest impact on stress (item 5). Conflict with a teacher does not have much effect on students (item 10). Secondly,conflicts with others will not bring students too much stress (item 4).

Environmental stress

Table 8 describes the impact of environment on students' stress. Only a small percentage of students (17.30%) reported high levels of environmental stress, with low and middle level students accounting for 42.50% and 40.20%. It can be seen that environment does not have a great influence on students' pressure level. As shown in Table 9, the difficulty in accessing the Internet will bring high pressure to most students (item 4). Secondly, the lack of recreational facilities and water supply on campus will also cause high pressure for some students (item 1, item 7). However, the lack of electricity does not cause students too much pressure (item 2).

Table 8. Degree of environmental stress

Levels of environmental stress	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative Percent
Lower	74	42.50	42.50	42.50
Moderate	70	40.20	40.20	82.70
Higher	30	17.30	17.30	100.00
Total	174	100.00	100.00	100.00

	Never (%)	Rarely (%)	Some-times (%)	Freq. (%)
1. Lack of recreational centers in the campus	35.06	31.03	16.67	17.24
2. Lack of electricity in the campus	48.28	24.71	18.39	8.62
3. Lack of well-equipped dormitory	39.08	30.46	17.24	13.22
4. Difficulty in computer and internet access	26.44	24.14	22.99	26.44
5. Discomfort quality of the classroom settings	44.25	29.31	16.67	9.77
6. Cafeteria service is not available	31.03	22.99	31.03	14.94
7. Water supply problem in the institution	35.63	28.16	17.82	18.39
8. The quality of health services in medical institutions is not good	40.23	29.89	22.99	6.90
9. Problems with the facility's toilet and shower service	38.51	32.18	21.26	8.05
10. Disappointed by the shortage of study rooms	41.95	31.03	17.24	9.77

Table 9. Summary of the environmental stressors (for each item)

Psychological stress

Table 10 gives an analysis of stress levels in terms of psychological factors. 18.4% of students reported high levels of stress, compared with 46% of students with low levels and 35.6% with medium levels.

Table 10. Degree of psychological stress

Degree of psychological stress	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative Percent
Lower	80	46	46	46
Moderate	62	35.6	35.6	81.6
Higher	32	18.4	18.4	100
Total	174	100	100	100

Table 11. Summary of the psychological stressors (for each item)

Psychological stressors	Never (%)	Rarely (%)	Some-times (%)	Frequently (%)
1. Sense of inferiority	44.83	27.59	20.69	6.90
2. Everything done is an effort	37.36	32.18	21.84	8.62
3. Lack of clear vision	37.93	30.46	20.69	10.92
4. Feeling of incompetence	35.06	27.01	28.74	9.20
5. Low self-esteem and self-concept	44.83	31.61	16.09	7.47
6. Poor memory power and	31.03	28.74	28.16	12.07
7. Pessimistic or negative thoughts.	39.66	30.46	19.54	10.34
8. Lack of motivated	34.48	28.16	26.44	10.92
9. Dissatisfaction with college	39.08	28.16	24.14	8.62
10. Irrational thinking	41.38	34.48	17.24	6.90

Table 11 shows the ratio of specific factors causing psychological stress. In the part of high pressure, it can be seen that students' poor memory and lack of concentration will lead to psychological pressure (item 6). In the medium stress level, most students are not low in stress because they often feel powerless (item 4). On the other hand, low levels of stress do not cause moststudents to feel low self-esteem or low self-esteem or self-awareness (item 1 and item 5).

Level of Stress (Overall)

According to the results of the five stress levels classified in the survey(Table 12), the students' stress levels were generally moderate (47.7%). Only a few students (9.1%) had high stress.

Table 12. Summary of the Overall frequency distribution of the degree of stress

Overall stress levels	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative
Lower	75	43.10	43.10	43.10
Moderate	83	47.70	47.70	90.80
Higher	16	9.10	9.10	100.00
Total	174	100.00	100.00	100.00

Level of stress and demographic factors

The relationship among gender and overall degree of stress

Table 13. Summary of cross-tabulation for Gender and degree of stress

Gender		Level of overall stress			Total
		Lower	Moderate	Higher	
Male	Number	38	34	6	78
	%	48.72%	43.59%	7.69%	44.83%
Female	Number	37	49	10	96
	%	38.54%	51.04%	10.42%	55.17%
Total	Number	75	83	16	174
	%	43.10%	47.70%	9.20%	100.00%

As shown in table 13, most of the male (78) had low degree of stress (48.72%), which was similar to the proportion of the medium stress group (43.59%), while only 6 (7.69%) had high degree of stress. Of the 96 females, those with moderate degree of stress were the most at 51.04%. People with low and high stress levels accounted for 38.54% and 10.42%, respectively. According to the data, both male and female are more or less equally stressed. The chi-square test result [X^2 (2, N=174) =3.66, p=0.11] does not show any statistically significant difference in the degree of stress and gender.

The relationship between degree of stress and academic performance

As shown in table 14, there were only 15 students with low CGPA (8.62%) and 100 students with average scores (57.47%). Fifty-nine students (33.91 %) got high grades. Two of the students with low CGPA had high stress (13.33%), 6 had moderate stress, and 7 had mild stress. Students with average grades were most likely to be under average stress (57%). Students with high grades also had the highest percentage of high stress (15.25%). The chi-square test result [X^2 (4, N=174) =5.03, p=0.19] does not show any significant difference in the degree of stress and CGPA.

Table 14. Summary of cross tabulation for academic performance and level of stress

CGPA		General Level of stress			Total
		Lower	Moderate	Higher	
Lower CGPA (1.75- 2.39)	Number	7	6	2	15
	%	46.67%	40.00%	13.33%	8.62%
Average CGPA (2.40-2.79)	Number	38	57	5	100
	%	38.00%	57.00%	5.00%	57.47
Higher CGPA (2.80-4.00)	Number	30	20	9	59
	%	50.85%	33.90%	15.25%	33.91
Total	Number	75	83	16	174
	%	43.10%	47.70%	9.20%	100%

CGPA – Cumulative Grade Point Average

Discussion

In this study, the degree of stress among Chinese college students of Business living in South Korea were investigated in five different fields. They are academic, social, physiological, psychological and environmental stress. In addition, this study also attempts to investigate whether the overall stress of students is related to gender and GPA.

According to the report, most of students' pressure comes from their studies. And the other four areas where the majority of the students had moderate to low levels of stress. In addition, the results showed no correlation between student stress and gender or CGPA. In the part of academic pressure, most students cannot concentrate on study for a long time and feel pressure for daily study. Our result somehow shows similarity with previous study done by Abouserie (1994) and other researcher (Misra R. and Castillo, 2004) reported that most of the students' academic pressure came from preparation for exams and competition for grades. Bataineh (2013) reported that the pressure of college students mainly came from economic problems, lack of educational resources and the pressure of schoolwork in each semester.

As for the environmental part of stress, a study in Ghana found that the main source of stress for students was environmental factors (Azila-gbettor et al., 2015). But only a small percentage of students in the study were bothered by environmental problems. We conclude that schools provide good infrastructure for both study and recreation. In the part of physiological stress, earlier study done by Walton (2002) pointed out that students would suffer from high pressure due to lack of a good life, poor dietary habits and lack of exercise. But in this study, most of the students had low levels of physiological stress.

Thawabieh and Qaisy (2012) mentioned that the pressure of college students mainly comes from social factors. In contrast, this research report shows that most students are at a low level of stress. In the part of psychological pressure, most of the students are also in the state of low pressure. However, Feng (1992) pointed out that setting too high a standard for oneself, pursuing perfection or self-degradation are all sources of students' psychological pressure. LvWencong and Lin Beilei (2018) put forward that contemporary college students are often reluctant to seek help due to low self-esteem when facing psychological problems. In this case, it is necessary to cultivate students' positive psychological quality and improve their mental health and self-processing ability.

Comparing with the research results of Bhosale (2014) and Omoniyi and Ogunsanmi (2012), this study shows that there is no significant difference between students' stress and gender. In addition, this study is consistent with the results of Ogaratnam and Buchanan (2004) and Azila-gbettor et al. (2015), failing to find an association between stress and academic performance. In this study, students' overall stress was at a moderate level. Most of this stress comes from students' self-learning ability.

Conclusion

The results of this study show that most students are at a moderate level of stress. Of the five fields, only the academic field has more students under medium and high-level stress. In other fields, most students have medium to low levels of stress. Among them, social fields bring

students the least pressure. It can be seen that social factors have little influence on students. However, most students do not have excessive pressure in terms of physical, environmental, and psychological stress. The tables also show that most students do not become depressed because of their low CGPA. So according to the study, there is no significant relationship between stress level and CGPA. And the results our study also showed no relationship between gender and stress levels.

Implications

The development of the study could help administrators deal with college life of Chinee students studying in South Korea, especially in the department of Business. University can organize several events, like international day or Chinese New Year festival to accommodate Chinese as well as local students and help them to socialize more. Organizing both academic and nonacademic activities could help international students to share their thoughts and their difficulties staying and studying in South Korea. The students' union can organize various activities or provide some help according to the students' stress performance. Schools should also pay attention to students' mental health for psychological guidance to promote students' emotional health.

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