# A sociological viewpoint of social stress in college students

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*Abstract: Social stress among college students arises from academic pressure, financial concerns, and social expectations. Balancing coursework, exams, and future career uncertainties often leads to heightened anxiety. Peer pressure, maintaining relationships, and managing social media presence further contribute to emotional strain. Financial burdens, such as paying tuition and living expenses, add to the stress, especially for those from poor backgrounds. Additionally, mental health issues like anxiety and depression are common but often go unaddressed due to stigma or lack of resources. Coping with these challenges requires support systems, time management, and accessible mental health services to ensure students' well-being.*

**Key words: social stress, students arises, academic pressure, financial concerns, expectations**
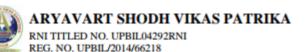
**Introduction:** Over time, we create an image of ourselves that is consistent with our perceptions. I'm inclined to think of myself as a funny person if I think it about the individuals I connect with. A micro-level viewpoint in sociology that concentrates on "small-scale patterns of social interaction in specific settings" is known as symbolic interactivity. The advocates of symbolic interaction hold that social interactions consist of countless instances of everyday verbal and nonverbal communication, during which people constantly understand what others are saying and react accordingly. However, in my opinion, the main source of this stress is society itself, as people seek higher social status and are often dissatisfied with their current circumstances. As such, we are the ones who create this stress. In my opinion, stress is nothing more than our perspective of anything that society creates. Society puts pressure on us to marry at a specific age, regardless of gender, to have a successful career at a certain age, and moreover, we compare ourselves to others and our parents to other children, which causes us stress.

The word "stress" can be used in almost any way. It is useful for defining difficult circumstances or occurrences, such as tests, as well as the overall discomfort we feel in them, as well as our physiological responses to them, such as a beating heartbeat, and our bodies' and minds' attempts to manage the unease to recover a sense of wellness. Many academics define stress by mentioning the condition that arises from meeting various stressors. As a result, stress is defined as "a state of imbalance within an individual, caused by a real or imagined difference between the demands of their environment and their ability to meet those demands." The framework of the stress process can be summed up as follows: an individual encounters a range of stressful situations, or stressors, and evaluates each one based on its level of danger. Stressors that threaten a person must be dealt with since unresolved stressors negatively impact the individual. During this phase, social support can mediate the relationship between stress and its effects.

For many sociologists, identifying stressors—social forces or factors that contribute to stress—is of the greatest significance. These forces range from the most general social forces and large-scale social structures to the particular social settings that people live in daily, making it difficult to define them. Naturally, the importance of society structure and broader social dynamics must be considered in attempts to understand behaviour among people. One of the most important findings in sociology is that social environments—even in situations that appear to be individualistic—have a big influence on how people behave.

**Review of the literature**: The social stress theory, developed by **Sociologists John Turner and hooks, b. (1984). Feminist theory: from margin to centre. Cam., Mass.: South End Press.**in the 1970s, posits that stress is a social phenomenon influenced by one's social

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environment. It identifies three main causes: social role strain, social isolation, and stereotype threat. Social role strain refers to difficulties and tensions resulting from multiple responsibilities, while social isolation refers to the lack of social networks or support systems.

Here are some social stress theories proposed by sociological thinkers: **Émile Durkheim's anomie** theory suggests social stress arises from a disconnect between personal objectives and societal standards. **Robert Merton's strain theory** suggests that cultural aspirations are out of reach due to institutional obstacles, leading to aggression, anxiety, and frustration. **George Herbert Mead's** social role theory suggests a conflict between self-concept and social roles. **Erving Goffman**'s concept of "face-work" illustrates how managing impressions in social settings can be a source of stress, as individuals strive to maintain their social roles and identities. **Karl Marx's conflict theory** suggests societal disputes, such as capitalism, cause stress and inequality. **Bell Hooks' feminist theory** argues that social stress is due to patriarchal structures and cultural gender roles. Critical Race Theory posits institutional racism and discrimination contribute to stress. **Charles Horton Cooley's looking-glass self-theory** illustrates how social environment affects self-perception and ability to handle stress. **George Herbert Mead and W. I. Thomas** both contributed to the symbolic interactive viewpoint, arguing that people are impacted by events based on how they are perceived and interpreted. Stressful events are not inherent, but rather circumstances that raise the risk of a stressful reaction. **The Thomas Theorem** states that if circumstances are real, their consequences are real. Social constructionism emphasizes that social stress is not inherent but constructed through shared societal meanings. What one culture or social group perceives as stressful may not be considered stressful in another. For example, ideas about success, failure, or ideal family roles are socially constructed and can create significant stress for individuals. Labelling theory, linked to **Howard Becker**, explains how being labelled in certain ways (e.g., as deviant, criminal, or mentally ill) creates social stress for individuals. Once labelled, people may face social exclusion or discrimination, further exacerbating stress.

**Need of the study:** These days, most people discuss how stressed they are out about a variety of things, including their jobs, relationships, studies, and other commitments. This research aims to investigate the social factors that contribute to stress among college students.

**Objective of the study:**
1) To study the societal set rules contributing to students' growing levels of stress.
2) To study how students' informal, formal relationships affect their stress levels
3) To study the personal reason of their increased stress.
4) To find out if students are under pressure to blend in with the world of social media.
5) To study the way future tension will also increase stress levels in them.

**Research questions:**
1) Teenagers today begin to question social norms and values.
2) Children are under constant pressure from their families to study hard and perform well on exams.
3) Pressure from their family and society to establish their own identity and status in society.
4) Students' kit and kin make wrapped comments.
5) Students compete with their peers, putting them under stress to succeed.
6) Their difficult financial situation and sometimes their parents give them less pocket money cause them to feel stressed out /embarrassed among their friends.

**Universe**: Since everyone is stressed out for various reasons, both personal and professional, it is impossible to include everyone in a study. Therefore, keeping in mind that today's children will be tomorrow's future, I chose senior class students who are pursuing bachelor's degrees and are old enough to express their opinions on any topic of the study.

**Sample:** For this study, samples of sixty students total—twenty per year—were chosen from Dr. D.Y. Patil Arts, Commerce, and Science College in Pimpri Pune.

**Data collection:**

**Primary Data-** Both primary and secondary methods were employed in the data collection process; a Google Form was utilised to obtain primary data (questionnaire). Before the actual data was released, a pilot study involving six students—two from each year who were not included in the survey—was carried out. As a result of the pilot research, various changes were made.

**Secondary Data** -Secondary data was obtained with the assistance of magazines, journals, the internet library, earlier study papers, and most importantly, observation.

**Tools-** To collect data for this problem, an online survey (a Google Form) was applied.

**Analysis of the data:**Following data collection, data analysis was used in this study to generate the following results:

**Description of age, and class of the respondents:** Twenty students each from FY B.A, SY BA, and TY BA with 80% being underage and 20% being adult students.

**Description of the respondents' living area and job:** The study found that 72% of respondents live in urban areas, whereas 28% live in rural areas. Out of 60 students, 54 are unemployed, while 6 are working to cover their expenses.

**Description of the respondent's parent job status and monthly income:** In this study, 39% of the respondent's father is a business owner, while 11% of the respondent's mother also runs a business. Additionally, 28% of the respondent's father works in the government, and 10% of the respondent's mother also works in the government sector. On the other side, 33% of respondents' fathers work in the private sector, and 31% of respondents' mother also work to support their families, while 48% of women are homemakers. When asked about their family's monthly income, 39% revealed that their family income is 10k to 30k, while 41% of the respondents said their family income is 40k to 60k.On the other hand, 13% of the family's monthly income is 70k to 1 lakh, while 7% of them have more than 1lakh monthly income.

**Responses to rigid social norms, values, patterns, and society mentality:**Regarding inflexible societal norms and beliefs, the majority of students hold an unfavourable opinion (61% believe that they hinder females' and sometimes boys') progress, while 39% of respondents have a positive perspective. Moreover 38% of them support social mindset, while 62% felt that it is stressful.

**The respondents responded that they feel anxious when their parents compare them to their sibling and that their parents put pressure on their career:** In response to this question, 48% of respondents said that their parents do put pressure on them to work hard so they can follow their careers, while 52% said that their family is supportive. Additionally, 61% of respondents indicated that they get uncomfortable when they compare themselves to their siblings, while 39% don't feel this way. furthermore, 50% of them said that they sometimes experience pressure from their parents' reputation to perform well on a competitive exam; however, 27% of them opposed feeling pressure during the exam, and 23% strongly agreed.

**Respondents' perception of an individual's identity is more important than their aptitude:** In response to the question "A person's identity is more important than their aptitude," most respondents—55.6%—agreed that occasionally the answer is yes, while 27.8% disagreed and 16.6% responded yes. In addition, 57% of respondents said that they occasionally feel guilty when their parents give them less pocket money, compared to 43% who do not.

**The impact of the respondents' home environment and future goals on their mental stability.** Regarding this matter, 55.6% of the participants express concern about their future, while 27.8% of them worry about it sometimes. Furthermore, 16.6% of the participants do not worry about their future. Furthermore, 63.3% of respondents acknowledged that their home environment,

particularly those related to money, either increases or decreases their mental pressure, while 36.7% disagreed.

**Conclusion-**To sum up, I can say that today's college students are more driven than we were. They are extremely focused on their careers and are adept at handling situations that arise in their personal or professional lives. In addition, they are articulate and mature enough to understand their goals and have insightful ideas about the future. However, occasionally they experience pressure from society's strict and orthodox norms, values, and patterns, their family's expectations also put pressure on them to adhere to socially prescribed parameters.

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