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EVALUATION OF STRESS AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS IN CHENNAI

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ABSTRACT:

Stress is an emotional feeling of tension. Stress is the body's reaction to a challenge or demand. Human life is closely intervened with the phenomenon of stress. Academic stress was due to parental pressure. The aim of the present study was to evaluate the stress among college students in Chennai. A total of 150 study participants were involved in the study. The data collected was analysed using SPSS software. About 59.3% of the participants came under the 5-13 points category. About 62.7% of the participants came under 5-13 points and 37.3% of the participants came under 14 points and above. About 29.3% of the males and 33.3% of the females participants came under the 5-13 points category. In the 5-13 points category, females had higher stress scores than males and 20.7% of the males and 16.7% of the females participants came under 14 and more than 14 points category. In the 14 and more than 14 points category, males had higher stress scores than females. Stress was most commonly caused due to heavy academic overload, fear of failure. Proper counselling and some relaxation should be initiated in the college at the earliest to decrease their stress level.

INTRODUCTION:

Stress is a feeling of emotional or physical tension. It can come from an event or thought. Stress is the body's reaction to a challenge. Human life has closely intervened with the phenomenon of stress. Minor and major events in life are related by stress. Stress has become an everyday thing and has become the topic of many conversations (Shahmohammadi, 2011). Stress as an inescapable part of life. Stress affects an individual both mentally and physically (Yikealo, Tareke and Karvinen, 2018). Stress can be experienced from four basic sources - The environment, Social stressors, physiological and thoughts (Poltavski and Richard Ferraro, 2000). Normally everyone needs a certain amount of pressure to perform at their best but when pressure exceeds a person's ability to cope, it may result in stress (Eva *et al.*, 2015). Negative emotions like anger, frustration and nervousness which develops stress in an individual occur more often in a person's life (Gosar and Venkatraman, 2019). Adolescence was a dangerous period of time where young people experience self organisation and role confusion (Bhargava and Trivedi, 2018). Stress related health complaints were common among young people (Taylor, 2010). Severe health conditions were caused by prolonged stress (Schneiderman, Ironson and Siegel, 2005). High school was a crucial stage thereafter students had to choose different subjects in higher secondary where their marks were the only consideration to allocate various streams of study (Pascoe, Hetrick and Parker, 2020). Education and academic performance are a significant source of stress to students (Subramani and Venkatachalam, no date). Anxious students were found to experience more stress compared to non anxious students (M, Hemavathi and Archana, 2017). A negative emotional, cognitive, behavioural and physiological process that occurs as a person tries to adjust to or deal with stressors is viewed as stress. Stress was considered as a state of individuals that results from their interaction with the environment that is perceived as too demanding and a threat to their well being. Stress has an impact on student's lives and on how they cope with demands of academic life. A state of tension produced by pressure or conflicting demands with which person cannot adequately cope. A mental distress associated with academic failure is called academic stress. Academic stress is a stress arising from important factors like writing term papers, test anxiety, poor study skills, excessive academic load and classroom environment, which in turn forms a major part of general stress in adolescent students (Sagar and Singh, 2017). Academic stress was positively correlated with parental pressure and psychiatric problems (Mishra *et al.*, 2017). Stress has an impact on student's lives and on how they cope with demands of academic life (Deb, Strodl and Sun, 2015). Every student experiences stress occasionally (Chung *et al.*, no date). The transition of students from high schools to the colleges was considered a major reason for the cause of stress. It could cause psychological, academic and social shock to them (Manandhar and Pramanik, 2019). Depression, anxiety, behavioural problems, irritability were reported in students with high academic stress. Depression was also found among stressful adolescents (Reddy *et al.*, 2018). Early identification of stress might result in a less stressful academic life for students, which in turn could enhance their academic performance (Gupta *et al.*, 2015). Mental and physical stress begins when studies begin, but stress management courses can

counteract this (Kabir, 2018). Stress results when an individual was unable to cope with a perceived past, present or future situation. Stress may arouse feelings of fear, incompetence, uselessness, anger, aggression and guilt, and if unresolved, may even lead to associated physical and psychological morbidity (Naidoo *et al.*, 2014). The aim of the present study was to evaluate the stress among college students in Chennai.

MATERIALS AND METHODS :

The present study was a questionnaire based study conducted among college students to evaluate the stress. A total of 150 participants, 75 were female and 75 were male participants, aged 18 - 25 years were included for the study. Convenient random sampling was done. In this study we used a standard stress questionnaire to evaluate the stress score. The questionnaire consists of three categories. The score below 4 considered no stress, the score between 5-13 points are likely to experience stress, the score 14 points and above is considered to experience severe stress and can be prone for stress related illness. Details of the study were explained to the study participants who were given the information sheet and consent was obtained from all the participants in the study. Basic demographic details were collected from the study participants. Completed questionnaires were collected back and verified. Data was collected and analysed using SPSS software. Chi square test was used to analyze and compare gender and stress scores. The confidence level was 95% and of statistical significance $P < 0.05$. Finally the result was presented by using bar graphs.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS:

About 62.7% of the participants came under 5-13 points. These participants were more likely to experience stress related ill health either mental, physical or both and 37.3% of the participants came under 14 points and above [Figure 1]. These participants experienced severe stress and were more prone to stress showing many characteristics that are creating unhealthy behaviours. This shows that participants who had scored more than 14 experienced stress and stress related illness (irritable bowel, migraine, back and neck pain, high blood pressure) and mental ill health (depression, anxiety). It was important to seek professional help or stress management counselling.

About 29.3% of the males and 33.3% of the females participants came under the 5-13 points category. In the 5-13 points category, females had higher stress scores than males and 20.7% of the males and 16.7% of the females participants came under 14 and more than 14 points category. In the 14 and more than 14 points category, males had higher stress scores than females. There was no significant association between gender and stress scores. Chi square test value - 1.026 p value -0.311(>0.05) which was statistically not significant [Figure 2]. About 46% of the participants feel tired even after an adequate sleep and 54% of the participants don't feel tired after an adequate sleep [Figure 3]. Majority(69.3%) of the participant's appetite pattern was changed and 30.7% of the participant's appetite was not changed [Figure 4]. Majority(90.7%) of the participants agreed that they feel irritated often and

9.3% of the participants don't feel irritated often [Figure 5]. About 51.3% of the participants have experienced mood swings and 48.7% of the participants have not experienced mood swings [Figure 6]. About 67.3% of the participants agreed that they don't have time for their interests/hobbies whereas as 32.7% of the participants responded that they have time for their hobbies [Figure 7]. About 62.4% of participants reported that they bring too many works to home and 37.3% don't bring too many works to home [Figure 8]. About 78% of participants suffer from insomnia and 22% of participants don't suffer from insomnia [Figure 9]. About 42% of the participants suffer from parental pressure and 58% of the participants don't suffer from parental pressure for better academic performance [Figure 10].

In the study conducted by Dawit Yikealo et al, 69% of the participants never had poor appetite, 59.3% of the participants never had sleep problems whereas in the present study, the majority (69.4%) of the participant's appetite pattern was changed and 46% of the participants feel tired even after an adequate sleep which contrasts with our study (Yikealo, Tareke and Karvinen, 2018). In the study conducted by Deepti Bhargav et al, the results indicated that participants experience stress and symptoms. The highest percentage (81.6%) of the participants had suffered from depression followed by Insomnia (79.82%) and the study also found that most of the participants had suffered from depression, tension and in the present study 78% of the participants had suffered from insomnia which was similar to the previous studies (Bhargava and Trivedi, 2018). In the study conducted by Michael et al, 66% of participants reported feeling stressed about poor grades (Bhargava and Trivedi, 2018; Pascoe, Hetrick and Parker, 2020). In the study conducted by Subramani C, 47.5% of participants reported that they bring too many works to home. In the present study 62.4% of participants reported that they bought too many works to home which is also similar to the previous study findings (Subramani and Venkatachalam, no date). In the study conducted by Hemavathi et al, The findings were first and final year students who were highly stressed (M, Hemavathi and Archana, 2017). In the study which was conducted by Soma Gupta et al, concluded that hostellers had undergone higher levels of stress than day scholars (Gupta *et al.*, 2015). In the study conducted by Chen, Yu Ping et al, their findings were that high stress levels are associated with sleep disturbance, higher fatigue severity and more depressive symptoms (Lee *et al.*, 2013). In the study conducted by Vivek et al, reported that students living in hostels experience more stress than the students living elsewhere (Waghachavare *et al.*, 2013). In the present study 42% of the participants have undergone pressure from their parents for better academic performance which was similar to the study conducted by Deb sibrath, 66% of participants reported that they get pressure from their parents for better academic performance and 63.5% of participants reported stress due to academic performance (Deb, Strodl and Sun, 2014). In the study conducted by Singh et al, The findings suggested that colleges had to provide students with physical, academically, emotional, behavioural, counselling in order to decrease the students stress. They have to provide students with suitable teaching and learning methods in order to decrease their academic stress (Singh *et al.*, 2018).

There were various ways to overcome stress. Practice of meditation is one such way of relieving stress. Meditation was often used to clear the mind, reduce stress and help to promote relaxation and train the mind (Santhanam, Preetha and Devi, 2018). Practice of various exercises like aerobics, Yoga has also been found to reduce stress (Packyanathan and Preetha, 2020).

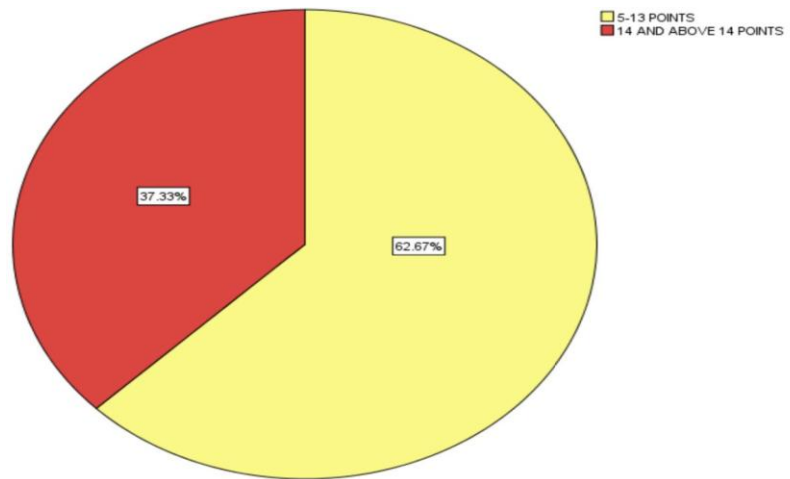


Figure 1: Pie chart representing percentage distribution of participants' stress scores where yellow colour denotes 5-13 points category and red colour denotes 14 and above 14 points category. Majority(62.7%) of the participants came under the 5-13 points category (blue).

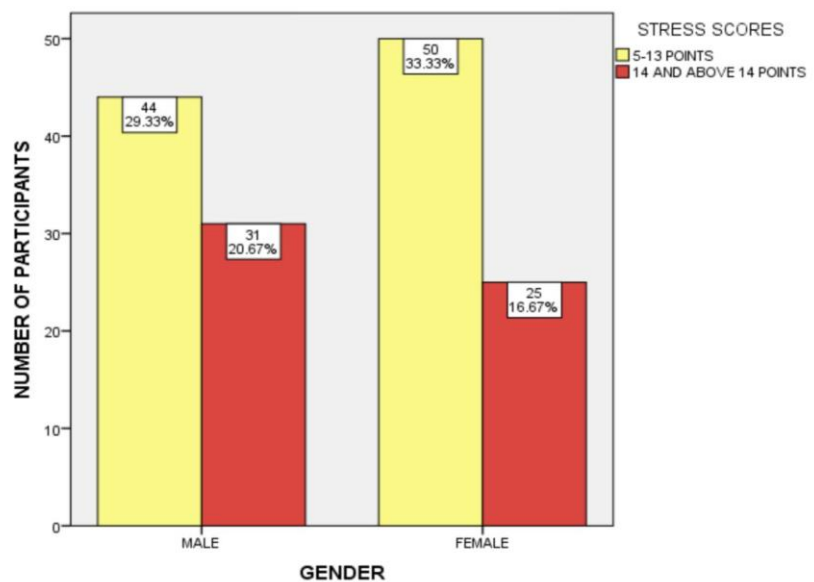


Figure 2: Bar graph representing percentage distribution of association between gender and stress scores. X axis represents the gender and Y axis represents the number of participants where yellow colour denotes 5-13 points and red colour denotes 14 and more than 14 points. In the 5-13 points

category(blue), females had higher stress scores than males. In the 14 and more than 14 points category(green), males had higher stress scores than females. Chi square test value -1.026, p value - 0.311 (>0.05) - statistically not significant.

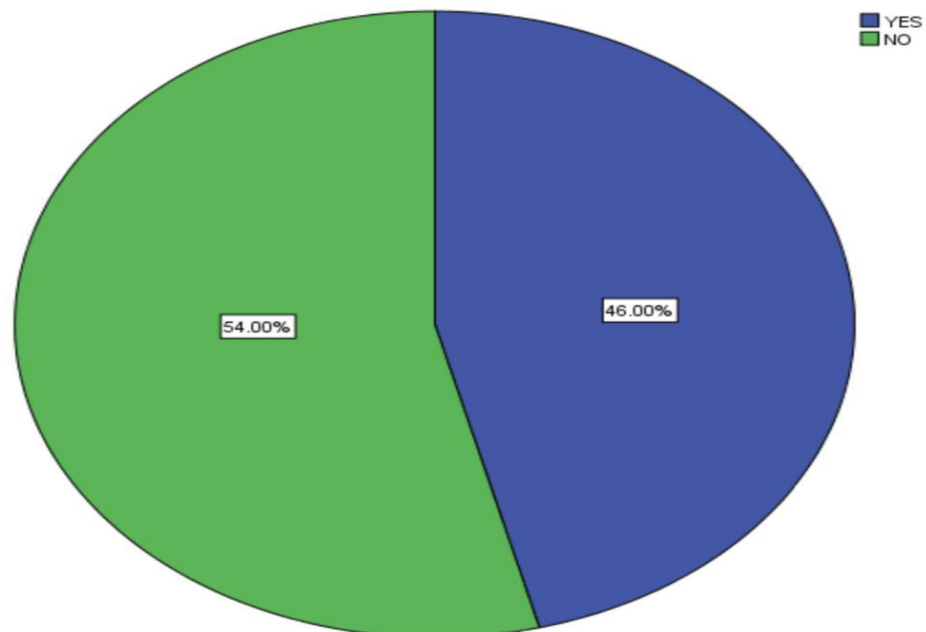


Figure 3: Pie chart representing percentage distribution of participants who feel tired even after an adequate sleep where blue colour denotes yes and green colour denotes no. About 46%(blue) of the participants feel tired even after an adequate sleep.

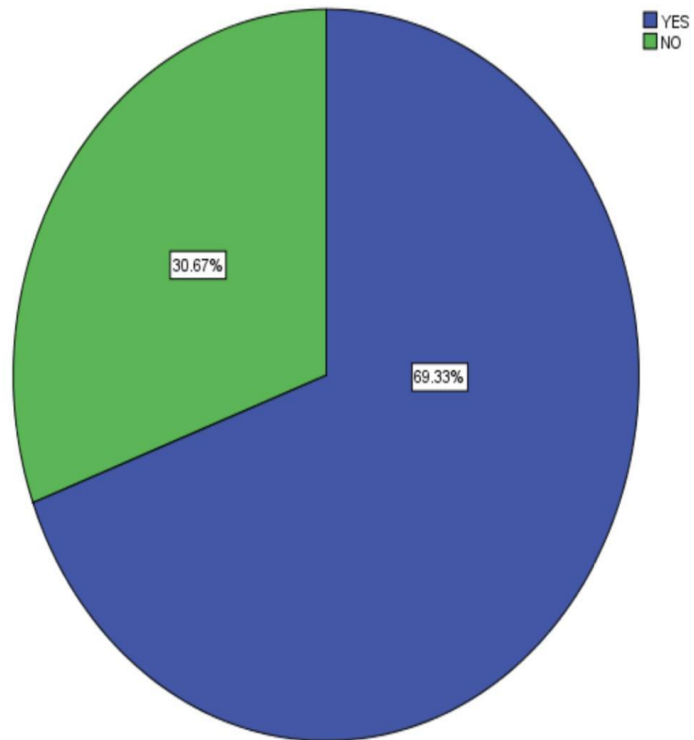


Figure 4: Pie chart representing percentage distribution of participants whose appetite pattern has changed where blue colour denotes yes and green colour denotes no. Majority(69.3%) of the participant's appetite pattern was changed (blue).

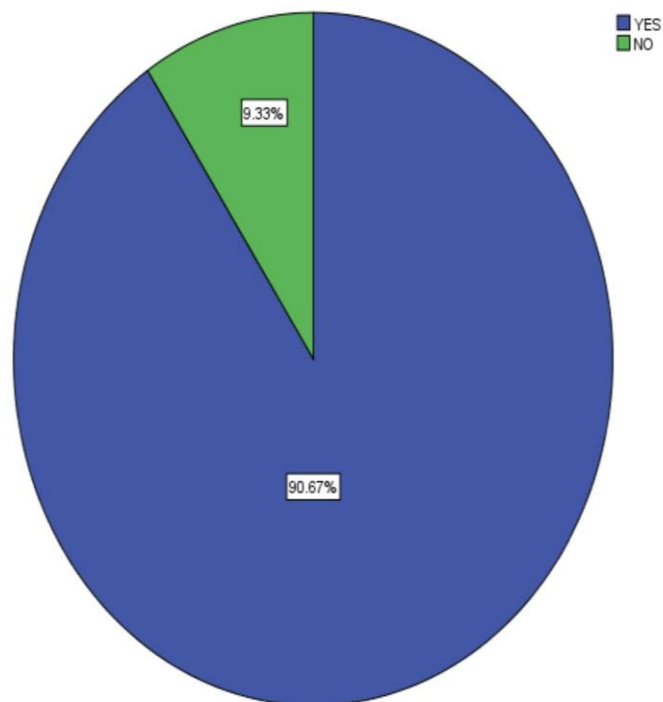


Figure 5: Pie chart representing percentage distribution of participant's who feel irritated often where blue colour denotes yes and green colour denotes no. Majority(90.7%) of the participants agreed that they feel irritated often(blue).

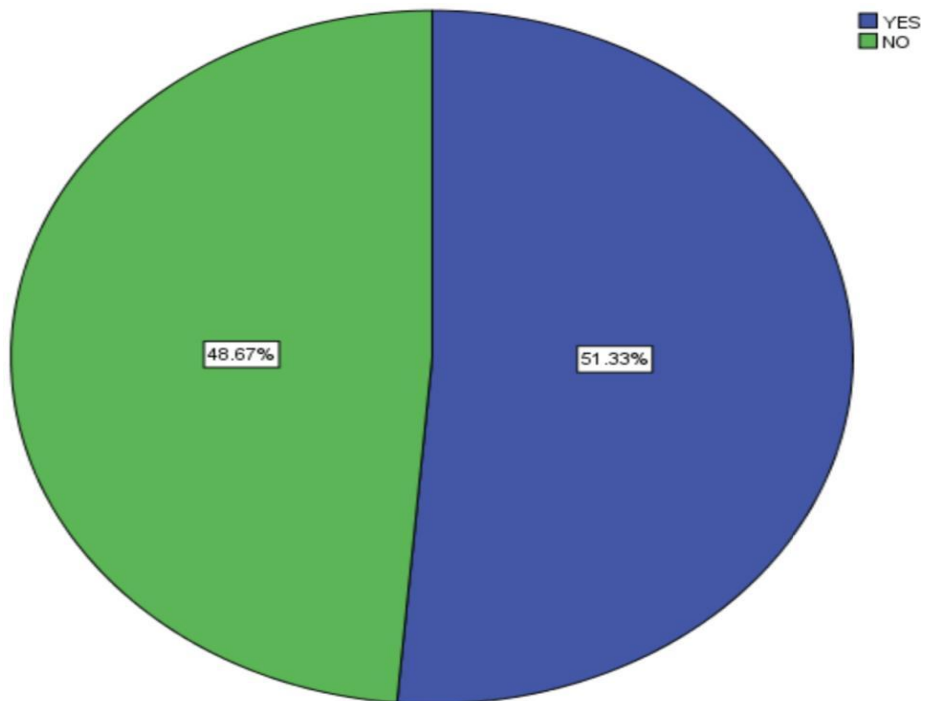


Figure 6: Pie chart representing percentage distribution of participants who have experienced mood swings where blue colour denotes yes and green colour denotes no. About 51.3%(blue) of the participants have experienced mood swings.

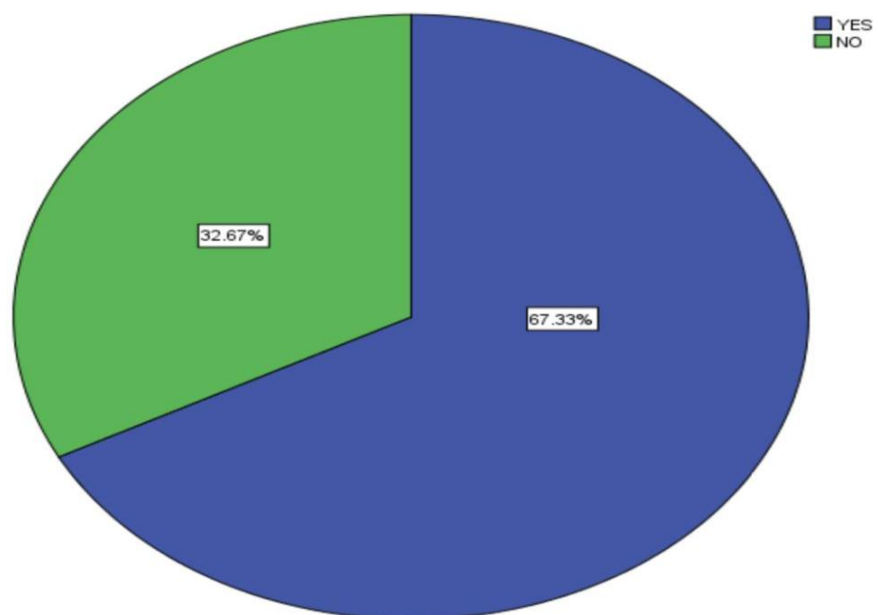


Figure 7: Pie chart representing percentage distribution of participants who have no time for their interests/hobbies where blue colour denotes yes and

green colour denotes no. About 67.3% (blue) of the participants agreed that they don't have time for their interests/hobbies.

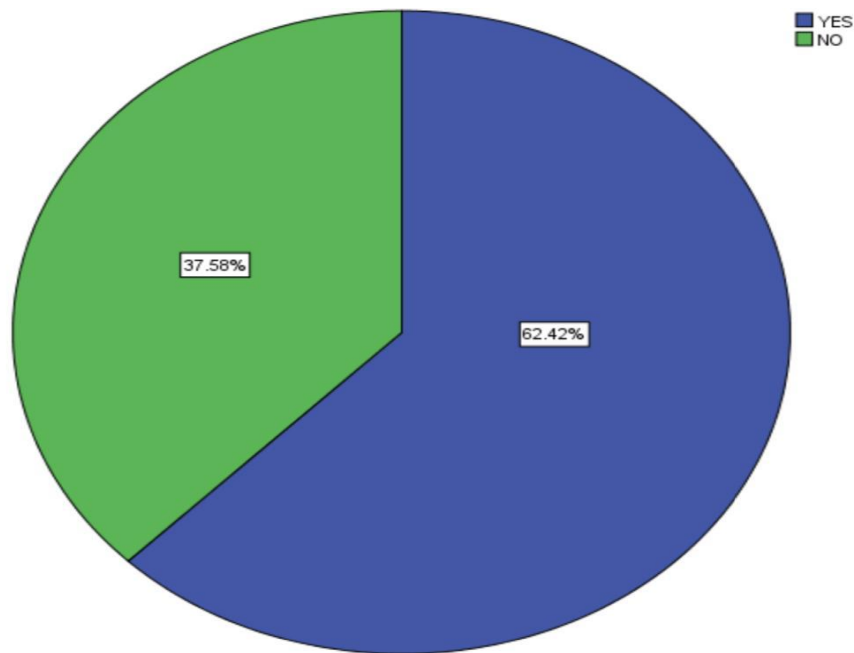


Figure 8: Pie chart representing percentage distribution of participants who bring lots of work to home where blue colour denotes yes and green colour denotes no. 62.4% (blue) of the participants bring work to home.

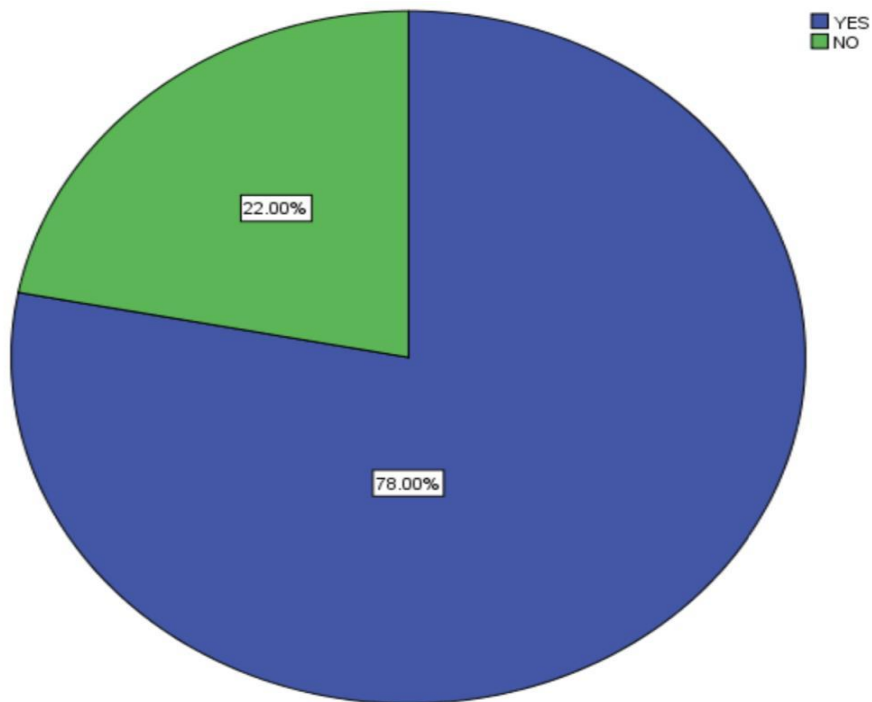


Figure 9: Pie chart representing percentage distribution of participants who suffer from insomnia where blue colour denotes yes and green colour denotes no. Majority (78%) of the participants suffer from insomnia (blue).

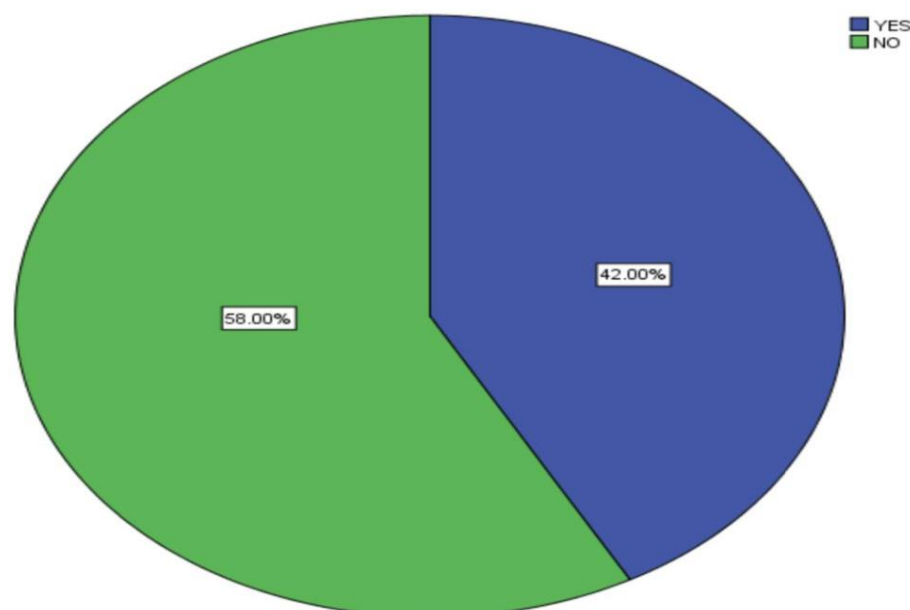


Figure 10: Pie chart representing percentage distribution of participants who suffer from parental pressure for better academic performance where blue colour denotes yes and green colour denotes no. 42% (blue) of the participants suffer from parental pressure for better academic performance.

CONCLUSION:

Stress was a common every day event. Stress was caused due to heavy academic overload, fear of failure. In this study, it is concluded that 59.3% of the participants were highly stressed and they were more prone to stress related disorders. Therefore proper counselling and some relaxation should be initiated at the earliest to decrease the stress level. Students need to be aware and guided to identify and monitor their own well-being and to select good positive strategies to overcome stress.

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