

## **PERCEIVED STRESS AMONG FRESH MALE GRADUATES: A COMPARATIVE STUDY**

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### **Abstract**

*Unemployment remains an issue from the start of 21 Century which has many psychological effects on individual's life such as stress, depression, lowered self-esteem, apathy and self-doubt. The main objective of the present study is to see the differences among employed and unemployed fresh male Graduates on perceived stress and its association with age and various fields of study (e.g. natural, social and computer sciences). The study was conducted over a period of one month, March, 2019 and a sample of 150 males, freshly Graduated from various universities of Islamabad/Rawalpindi, has been collected by using convenient non-probability sampling. Demographic sheet and Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) (Cohen et al., 1988) were used for data collection. Results revealed significant mean differences between employed and unemployed fresh male Graduates on perceived stress. Further results showed that correlation between stress and age of the graduates whereas differences among groups of graduates from various field of education on PS were not significant. On the basis of results, it is concluded that graduates from various universities experienced stress, so along with increasing job opportunities, stress management programs should be taken into consideration for them.*

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**Keywords:** Daily life stress, university graduates, employment status, unemployed male graduates, perceived stress

### **Introduction**

Being a university graduate is an achievement and considered as a key to professional success. Owing to expansion of universities and their campuses, the number of university students has increased in last two decades. However, expansion of job opportunities is very minimal as compared to growing number of graduates every year (Wadud, 2018). Unemployment remains an issue from the start 21 century but initially focus was on its material consequences (Feather, 1989). After 1980, the emphasis shifted to new dimension and it was found that this phenomenon of unemployment has enormous psychological consequences. Individuals with higher qualification and degrees come in field with great motivation and are aspiring to get some good jobs. But when they are unable to find suitable work, this leads to stress and depression. They start feeling insecure regarding their future and doubting their capabilities (Bachman, Malley & Johnson, 1978; Sobrinho, 2009; Lima & Gomes, 2010). This topic remains under investigation and there are many schools of thoughts highlighting various aspects of this issue. Actually, fresh graduates have higher expectations about their standing in society and occupational identity which is closely linked to their employment status. So not finding jobs on time create stress among them. Few other researchers debated that if graduates have access to more personal and situational resources, they can find this time as bring some positive changes in their personalities and cope better with the stress of unemployment. A qualitative study with newly graduated unemployed nurses revealed that unemployment produced psychological distress among them, especially symptoms of depression (Silva & Marcolan, 2015).

Another study highlighted the psychological effects of unemployment for a group of 240 Malaysian graduates during their transition from university to labor market. Results showed the negative psychological impact of unemployment (Lim, 2010). Similar type of resulted were also shown in various studies revealing psychological disorders with significant impairment in social and personal life functioning (Arafat, 2019; Lim et al, 2018).

Few researchers come up with somewhat different philosophy such as Cassidy (2007) studied the same subject on 181 recent graduates and concluded that those who were employed (n = 88) scored higher on both somatization and interpersonal sensitivity than those who were unemployed (n = 93).

Though there is huge body of literature is available in this area (Marshall, Allison, Nykamp, & Lanke (2008); Robotham & Julian, 2006) but there are several issues that as yet have not been explored. Such as these research studies have been restricted to the subjects' individuals from a narrow range of disciplines. So, this study has been planned to see the level of stress among employed and unemployed male graduates from various field of education (geography/psychology/textile, Pakistan studies /Islamic studies /English, botany/zoology/chemistry, mathematics/economics and computer science).

## **Methodology**

### **Objectives**

The main objective of study was to assess the level of perceived stress among employed and unemployed fresh graduates and its association with demographic variables such as field of education and age.

### **Hypotheses**

The hypotheses of research are as under:

1. Unemployed graduates score higher on perceived stress as compared to employed graduates.
2. Perceived Stress is positively correlated with age of graduates.

3. Perceived Stress significantly differs among graduates from various fields of study.

### **Sample**

This study used convenient non probability sampling for data collection and total sample size of present study was 150 male university graduates with mean ages 24.65 years (SD 1.55) from various universities located in Rawalpindi and Islamabad over a period of one month, March, 2019. Description of sample is given in table-I.

### **Instruments**

A brief demographic sheet is used to obtain demographic characteristics of sample and The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) are used to assess the stress. The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) is the most widely used psychological instrument for measuring stress and degree to which situations in one's life are appraised as stressful. It is designed for use in community samples with at least a junior high school education. The questions are of a general nature and are relatively free of content specific to any subpopulation group. The questions in the PSS ask about feelings and thoughts during the last month. In each case, respondents are asked how often they felt a certain way. PSS scores are obtained by reversing responses (e.g., 0 = 4, 1 = 3, 2 = 2, 3 = 1 & 4 = 0) to the four positively stated items (items 4, 5, 7, & 8) and then summing across all scale items. It has satisfactory Cronbach's alpha value of 0.82 (Cohen et al, 1988).

### **Procedure**

Before the start of the study, ethical approval from concerned department ethical committee has been taken along with approval of synopsis. Permission from authorities of universities has been taken and students from different department were approached. Demographic sheet and perceived stress scale both were given to the participants along with informed consent and assurance was

given to them that personal information given by them will be kept confidential and used for research purpose only. The data was entered on SPSS-20 and analyzed.

## Results

Descriptive Statistics were carried out to describe the mean, SD and frequencies. In order to test the proposed hypothesis of present study Independent sample t-test and ANOVA were computed to see significant group differences and  $p$ -values  $<0.05$  was considered significant. Bivariate Pearson Correlation analysis was computed to see relationship between study variables.

**Table- 1: Descriptive statistics of sample of study (N=150)**

<i>Demographics</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
PS		12.86	4.74
Age		24.65	1.55
Job Status			
1. Employed	83		
2. Unemployed	66		
Field of Education			
1. Geography/Psychology/textile	14		
2. Pakistan Studies /Islamiat/English	21		
3. Botany/zoology/chemistry	28		
4. Mathematics/Economics	34		
5. Computer science	53		

This table shows demographic characteristics of sample such mean age (24 years), their employment status (employed=83 and unemployed=66) and their field of study (14 were graduates of geography, psychology and textile designing; 21 from Pak. Studies, Islamiat and English; 28 from natural sciences; 32 of maths/Economics students and rest were from computer science (53)).

**Table-2: Group differences on perceived stress among employed and unemployed university graduates (n=150)**

Variables	Employed Graduates (n=83)		Un-employed Graduates (n=66)		t (147)	p	Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			
PS	11.23	4.56	14.92	4.2	5.089	.000	0.84

Note. \* $p < .05$  Note: PS= Perceived Stress

Results indicate that there are significant mean differences between the employed and unemployed university Graduates on PS.

**Table-3: Bivariate pearson correlation between perceived stress and age (n=150)**

Variables	R	R
Age	-	-.119
PS	-	-

Note. PS= perceived stress, r = Correlation Coefficient.

Results revealed that correlation between age of graduates and perceived stress is not significant.

**Table-4: Mean differences among groups of Graduates from Various Field of Education on PS (n=150)**

Variables	Geo/Psy/tax (n=14)		Pks/isl/eng (n=21)		Bot/zolo/che (n=28)		Math/eco (n=34)		Cptrsci (n=53)		F	Eta sq
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
PS	14.21	4.96	11.8	4.94	12.79	4.2	11.62	4.57	13.45	4.87	1.62	0.043

Note. PS= perceived stress

Findings of this table show that there are no significant mean differences among groups of graduates from various field of education on PS.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

Unemployment is major issue in our country and it has various psychological effects on individual having graduate degrees but no job. It's very important to study this phenomenon with reference of group specific aspect. Present research was conducted to study the level of perceived stress among employed and unemployed graduates along with its relationship with demographic variables. This study confirmed the some of the trends found in researches done in past and highlighted some new findings according to our culture. As the results of this study revealed significant mean difference among employed and unemployed graduates on perceived stress ( $p=.01$ ), as validated by the existing literature that significantly high level of stress and relative mental health issues are associated with forced unemployment among young graduates (Rafi et al, 2019; Silva & Marcolan, 2015; Lima & Gomes, 2010). Further results showed correlation between perceived stress and age of the graduates, and differences among groups of graduates from Various Field of Education on PS are not significant. This is because mostly graduates are from same age group (21-28 years). And graduates from various fields are facing difficulties in job opportunities equally, so they all experience stress in their life. As this age bracket is considered as crucial in South Asia as being an adult, a male is expected to share responsibilities of his family. However, prolonged unemployment develops feeling of inadequacy and incompetence that develops various mental health issues (Mamun et al., 2019).

On the basis of results, it is concluded that fresh graduates from various universities experienced stress, when they are unable to get job after degree despite of their field of education.

### **Limitation and Recommendations**

1. This study conducted on small sample of male graduates only from various universities of Islamabad /Rawalpindi, so findings of research are not generalizable outside Islamabad/ Rawalpindi.
2. It is recommended that along with increasing job opportunities for unemployed graduates, stress management programs should be taken into consideration for them.
3. The study can be replicated in future as a mixed method study. Interviews or focus group discussions can be conducted to identify the types of stressors and social pressures being faced by graduates due to forced unemployment.

### **Declarations**

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This study was conducted as an independent research.

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#### **Conflict of interest:**

None

#### **Participant's consent:**

Consent from participants were taken



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