

## **Students and Stress**

How does stress positively affect students?



Häme university of applied sciences, International Business

Spring 2019

Jesse Laine, Joonas Kylä-Harakka & Hector Diaz

## CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	
1 INTRODUCTION .....	1
1.1 Research objective and research question .....	1
1.2 Research methods .....	1
1.3 Structure of the mini thesis .....	2
2 THEORY .....	2
3 PRACTICAL RESEARCH .....	3
4 ANALYSIS.....	4
4.1 Cross tabulated information .....	4
4.2 Challenges of the research and analysis .....	4-5
4.3 End analysis .....	5
5 SURVEY TABLES AND GRAPHS .....	6-8
5.1 First question .....	6
5.2 Second question .....	7
5.3 Third question .....	8
5.4 Cross tabulation of the results .....	8
6 RECOMMENDATIONS .....	9
7 CONCLUSION .....	10
8 LIST OF REFERENCES .....	11

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Research objective and research questions**

The aim of this mini thesis is to answer to the question how stress positively affects students? The question was chosen because students and young adults are under constant stress about school and various things in their lives. The whole focus of this thesis is on the positive (if any) effects of stress on students' and their academic performance. We hope to make clear that stress does have a positive impact on students and explain what causes lead to positive academic performance. Using our research methods qualitative and Quantitative, we were able to find different avenues and Indicators of positive effects on students. We chose a poll survey and academic articles to cross analyze and understand our theory in question. This led to more information and more knowledge further backing our theory. This paper aims to change the negative perspective on academic stress on students and help understand the underlying factors and which factors truly matter. Also, we aim to show how leadership plays a major role in leveling stress.

### **1.2 Research methods**

First of the research methods for this mini thesis was a poll for sophomore year international business students in Valkeakoski campus of Häme University of Applied Sciences (abbreviation 'HAMK' used later in the mini thesis). The poll consisted of three (3) multiple choice questions about stress and schoolwork. The question used were 'Is your work performance better under pressure?', 'When do you usually do your school assignments?' and 'Is the quality of your assignments better when you work under stress (for example deadline is closing in)?'. In addition, few academic publications about stress and school world were studied for this mini thesis. Very little previous research data was found on this subject. Slight amount of mixed research method was implemented as well considering the results of the poll and comparing pre-existing data on the subject and comparing the results. However, we did find many articles and publications that back our theory.

### 1.3 Structure of the mini thesis

Chapter	Name	Description
Chapter 1	Introduction	Introduction on thesis goals & research methods
Chapter 2	Theory	Literature review
Chapter 3	Practical Research	Research data
Chapter 4	Analysis	Conclusions and results of analyzing the survey results
Chapter 5	Recommendations	

## 2. THEORY

It was surprising to learn that there are only a few studies on the positive effects of stress and how it was only mentioned in some scientific articles in relation to students. For example, Rojas & Kleiner (2000, 103) supports our theory that stress is not necessarily a negative force for people as it is sometimes even a desirable sensation for creativity, productivity etc. They also categorize stress into two different categories; eustress and distress, former being “good” and latter being “bad” stress. Rojas & Kleiner also argue that this kind of eustress is the kind of stress that “motivates, gets you going, or makes you creative.” That kind of stress is useful in school environment or when you are needed to be creative or you really need to look outside of the box.

Forbus, Newbold and Mehta had similar findings on stress, that it has both positive and negative effects on students, when they compared the stress factors, coping strategies and time management behaviors of both non-traditional students and traditional students in their article on the subjects (Forbus, Newbold & Sanjay 2011, 109).

Another study on 141 first-year undergraduate students found out that high resourceful student didn’t have their grades affected by academic stress, but it did impact low resourceful student negatively (Akgun & Ciarrochi 2010, 287).

It is believed that leadership in teachers and groups plays a huge role in student stress. (Gary D. Shermana , Jooa J. Leea , Amy J. C. Cuddyb , Jonathan Renshonc , Christopher Oveisd , James J. Grosse , and Jennifer S. Lerner,1) believe that leaders have less stress because of the psychological resources that leaders hold. They also believe that leaders have less stress because they have more control of the situation.

### 3. PRACTICAL RESEARCH

The practical research used in finding trustworthy, relevant and accurate information was a short survey. This was to keep the answers in their original state and not give a rise in a change of opinion. The survey was done on the students of the class BNI18 from HAMK. The research goal was to retrieve information from a handful of classmates and conclude if stress related feelings caused people to perform better under stress. The survey conducted was of three questions with a total of 23 responses.

The first question on the survey included a simple question asking if the student's work performance was better under pressure, in which they were to answer yes, no and not sure. The second question involved a time in which the student usually completes the given assignments, ranging from right after the assignment was given to the student to doing it on the same day as the deadline. Lastly, the final question was about the quality of the assignments under stress, which was a simple yes, no and maybe. This was done to get quick results and are easy to analyze. The platform used was google forms to have speedy access to the information and be able to retrieve the data exported in a google sheets format so importing it to other programs, if necessary, was as easy as possible.

Altogether, like mentioned previously, the survey was taken approximately 23 times after it was sent out to the group BNI18 of HAMK International Business line. Most of the answers were very clear in the first question but the second and third one did not have that clear of a spread among the alternatives and there was no clear number one alternative, but instead there was an almost even spread among all of the alternative answers. Firstly, the question number one regarding the performance of a student under pressure being better gained positive answers from 14 people who took the survey, other eight answered no and the last remaining two people chose the "not sure" option. Secondly, the question number two asking the time students usually did their school assignments had the major amount of answers in doing the assignments a few days prior to the deadline from 10 people, rest of the answers had only one answer in the option "I start early but finish usually before deadline" and the others were spread evenly amongst the three other options with around four to five answers on each. Finally, the last question regarding the quality of the assignments being better under stress gained slightly more votes in the option "No" than "Maybe" and "Yes" being tied with around seven votes.

## **4. ANALYSIS**

### **4.1 Cross tabulated information**

To begin with, as stated in the practical research page, the survey collected the replies of 23 people out of the whole class it was sent to. Out of those 23 people the majority of 14 people said that they believed that their work performance was better under pressure, which indicates that if everyone from the class BNI18 had responded the result would've been very close to what it is now. Although people answered that their work performance was better under pressure, when cross tabulating all the answers it showed that the performance was greater, and it had no actual correlation to the quality of the assignments. Furthermore, people answered that they did their assignments a few days prior to the deadline in majority with previously mentioned 10 votes, which could also be of some importance to affecting the quality of the assignments. The data for this can be found below on the sixth page.

First, when the information from the survey was cross tabulated it showed a wide-spread range of replies with not much correlation with each other. The information indicated that the pressure or the time when doing the assignments did not affect the quality of them, when just looking at the pie charts produced in the SPSS statistics software used in the analysis. Secondly, working under pressure with a greater work performance than usual had almost no effect to the quality of the assignments either after viewing the cross tabulated results of the replies. If more submissions would have come through, it can be assumed that the results would not vary significantly from how they are now with just 23 replies. Lastly, after analyzing all the replies in SPSS, it showed that most of the people who answered to having a greater work performance under pressure also answered that they were either unsure whether or not their quality of the assignments was worse or it was simply unchanged. Compared to the people who answered that their performance was unchanged and had plenty of time to do the assignments often answered to having a worse quality or the quality was unaffected.

### **4.2 Challenges of the research and analysis.**

Analyzing the result of the surveys was not too simple since after the easy part of importing the data to SPPS and making all the charts, cross tabulating the results and

such, it showed that the results were even. In the pie charts the results could be easily compared and seen and could be compared to draw conclusions but when cross tabulating to see if people had answered having an assignment of greater quality with working on it for a shorter time and being under pressure, it was not that clear anymore. The greatest challenge conducting the research was to decide on who to send the survey to get as accurate results and get them in a short period of time to be able to conduct the whole research. The decision to run the survey on the class of BNI18 was to get replies as fast and accurate with experience of the class and its people the survey was easier to form and send it out when the class had free time to answer and no assignments to focus on too much to get the results.

Other challenges that came across were around the lack of already existing surveys or questionnaires in the same topic. This meant that the only research that was possible to conduct and sample data from was a survey or a questionnaire made from scratch and sent out to the students. Challenges faced were small ones and in the end the research for the whole thesis conducted was successful and informative enough to analyze it and draw a conclusion.

### **4.3 End analysis**

In conclusion, the survey ran with the class BNI18 produced several different results indicating that some students have different effects under stress and pressure regarding schoolwork. Working under pressure, according to the survey, made people work more efficiently but like mentioned before it might have hindered the quality of the assignments done. All of this could indicate that each of the questions had some sort of correlation with each other like mentioned when cross tabulating the data from the survey and if that was the case then stress and working under pressure might increase the work performance and rush people to work on the assignments more efficiently but produce worse quality assignments than usually. All this considered, the research was successful and produced helpful results for the thesis and gave more information on the topic since there was not that much data about the topic with the same aim of having a positive impact, rather than negative.

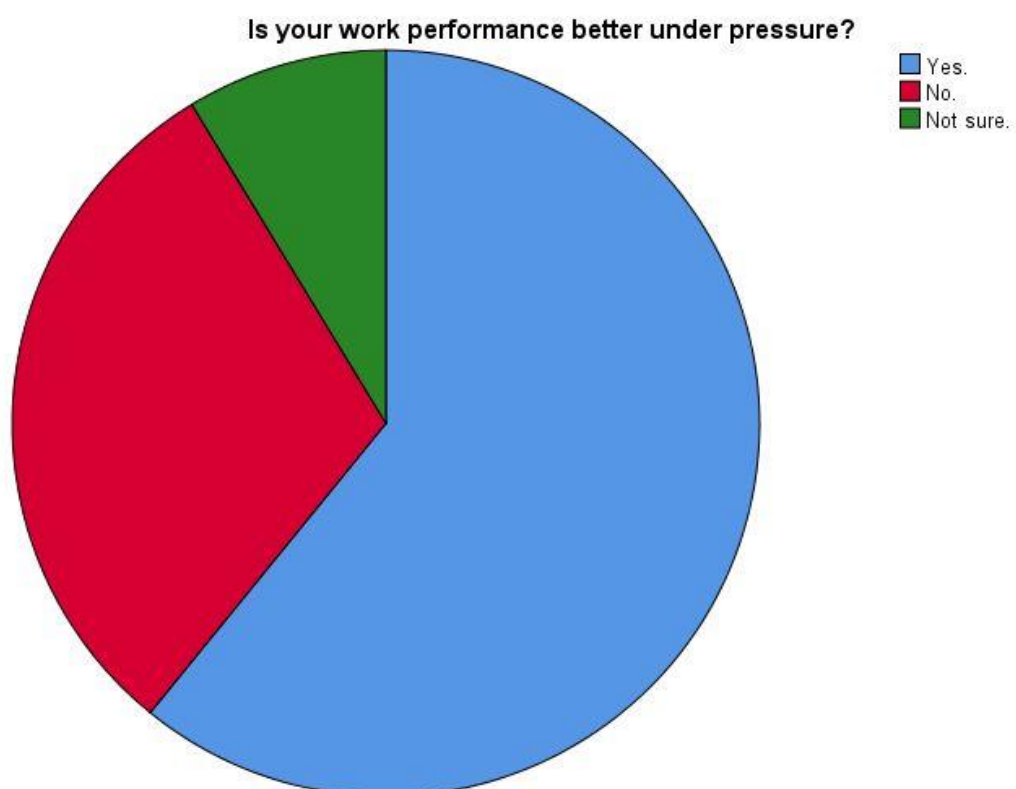
## 5. TABLES AND GRAPHS

### 5.1 First question

Table 1

Is your work performance better under pressure?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes.	14	60,9	60,9	60,9
	No.	7	30,4	30,4	91,3
	Not sure.	2	8,7	8,7	100,0
Total		23	100,0	100,0	

Figure 1." Is your work performance better under pressure?"



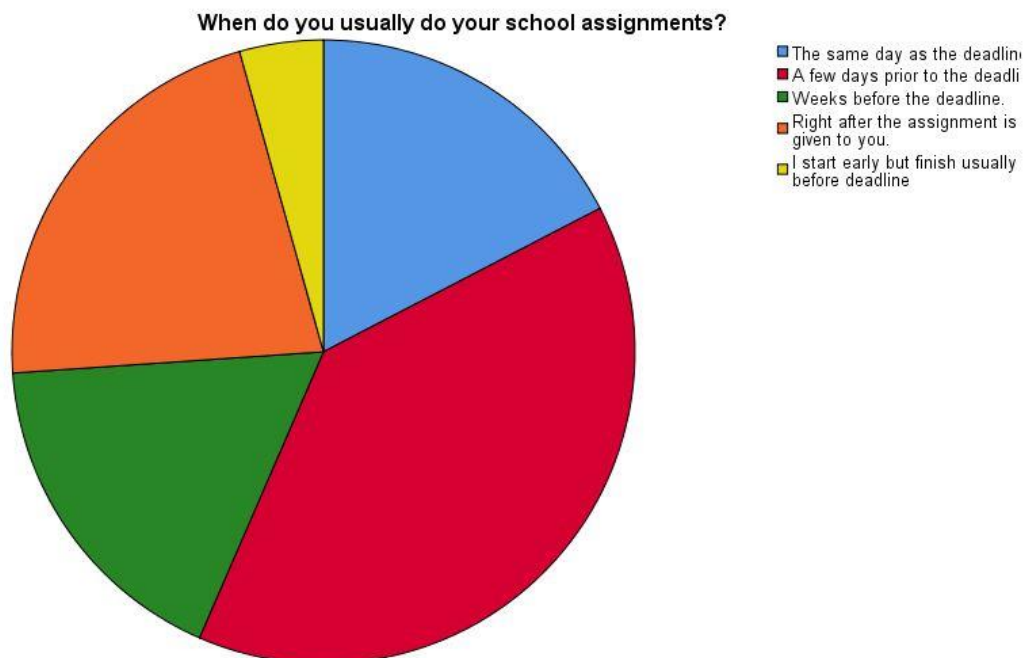


## 5.2 Second question

Table 2

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	The same day as the deadline.	4	17,4	17,4	17,4
	A few days prior to the deadline.	9	39,1	39,1	56,5
	Weeks before the deadline.	4	17,4	17,4	73,9
	Right after the assignment is given to you.	5	21,7	21,7	95,7
	I start early but finish usually before deadline	1	4,3	4,3	100,0
Total		23	100,0	100,0	

Figure 2. "When do you usually do your school assignments?"

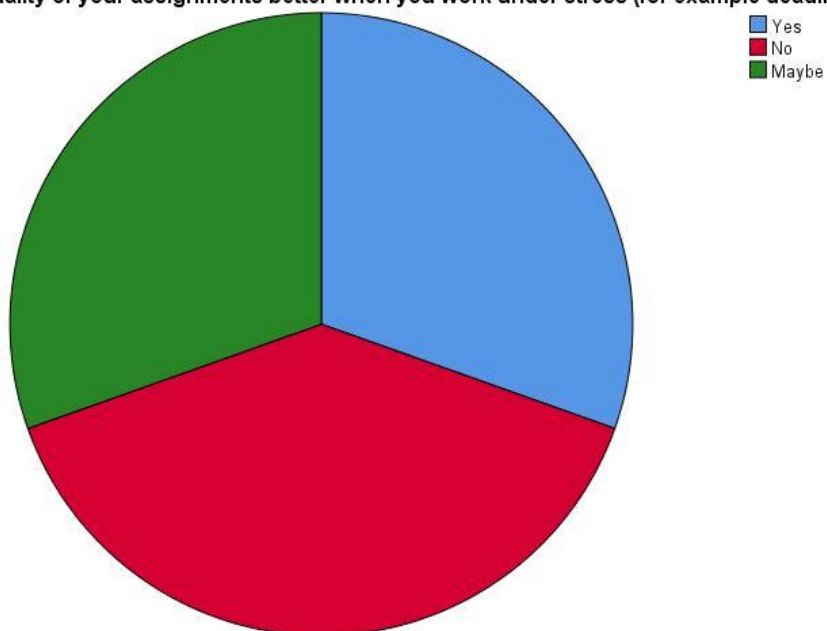


### 5.3 Third question

Table 3

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	7	30,4	30,4	30,4
	No	9	39,1	39,1	69,6
	Maybe	7	30,4	30,4	100,0
	Total	23	100,0	100,0	

Figure 3. "Is the quality of your assignments better when you work under stress?"  
Is the quality of your assignments better when you work under stress (for example deadline is closing in)?



### 5.4 Cross tabulation of the results

Table 4

Is the quality of your assignments better when you work under stress (for example deadline is closing in)? \* When do you usually do your school assignments?

Count		Crosstab					
		When do you usually do your school assignments?					
		The same day as the deadline.	A few days prior to the deadline.	Weeks before the deadline.	Right after the assignment is given to you.	I start early but finish usually before deadline	Total
Is the quality of your assignments better when you work under stress (for example deadline is closing in)?	Yes	1	1	1	4	0	7
	No	2	3	3	0	1	9
	Maybe	1	5	0	1	0	7
Total		4	9	4	5	1	23

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

After researching the subject and finding out the best strategies for students to use the most effective one was to consider yourself a leader all the time. In whatever situation they are working groups, alone, existing data shows that each student and individual should consider themselves a leader in their life to reduce stress. It is also believed that is important for students to be in a positive environment with very little negativity and join groups where they have positive reinforcement not criticized. As mentioned in the thesis the importance of giving feedback in a way that is not critical is very important in creating a low stress environment and improving people constantly as time passes. This gives them the ability to learn how to manage under stress when receiving feedback, but also gives them important information if something needs to be improved or changed to reduce the stress of others.

A subject discussed in the theory part of the thesis was being resourceful and it was an important matter in coping with stress, so it is also recommended to have the mindset of having everything in control and being resourceful even if a person was not that resourceful. This doesn't mean that a person must force themselves to be more resourceful or get even more stressed about it, but to have the correct mindset of having everything in control.

According to the research made, it is also recommended to start working on the assignments early but finish it before the deadline in a way where you do most of the work before the deadline. This is just to make sure the person has the basic information in mind and have all the framework done but still must write a bigger portion of it under slightly more stress. This proved to be a usual way that people did their assignments and still had better results and an assignment with better quality according to the survey.

## 7. CONCLUSION

Theory suggest that stress impacts students depending on the resources available to them, living situations, environment, time and stress management. Stress depending on the situation can impact academic performance but has no negative effects on the quality of assignments. Stress is not something that can be negative in schoolwork performance but sometimes can lead to a better product or creativity. Depending on the resources at hand many students have flourished in cases but some with low resources have not. Teacher burnout can also lead to student stress and poor academic performance. Teacher impacts have led to poor student academic performance and have known to cause low pupil interaction and involvement in activities. Theory also states that certain stress, depending on the gravity, can lead to inventiveness, imagination and innovation.

All in all, the whole thesis proved to gain some answers in order to help students gain a source of information about the topic since there was not that much data already available and a way to adjust their own working pace with the findings of the research and the whole thesis. Not much data was found but almost all the already existing data was collected in the thesis and formed into a comprehensive and a shortened text with research done on university students for others to read and learn something from.

## 8. LIST OF REFERENCES

Akgun, S. & Ciarrochi, J. (2010). Learned Resourcefulness Moderates the Relationship Between Academic Stress and Academic Performance. *An international journal of experimental educational psychology*. Volume 23(3), 287-294.

Forbus, P. & Newbold, J. & Mehta S. (2011). A study of non-traditional and traditional students in terms of their time management behaviours, stress factors, and coping strategies. *Academy of Educational Leadership Journal, suppl. Special Issue*. Volume 15, 109-125

Gloria C., Faulk K. & Steinhard M. (2012). Positive affectivity predicts successful and unsuccessful adaptation to stress. *Motivation and Emotion*. Volume 37(1), 185-193.

Rojas, V. & Kleiner, B. (2000). The Art and Science of effective stress management. *Management Research News*. Volume 23(7/8), 103-106.

Zhang, Q. & Sapp D. (2008). A Burning Issue in Teaching: The Impact of Perceived Teacher Burnout and Nonverbal Immediacy on Student Motivation and Affective Learning. *Journal of Communication Studies*. Volume 1, No.2, 150-168.

Al-Malki, M. & Juan, W. (2018). Leadership Styles and Job Performance: A Literature Review. *Journal of International Business Research and Marketing*, 3(3), 40-49.

Data from the original images of the charts and tables included after the analysis page.