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## Research Article

# STRESS MANAGEMENT AMONG RESEARCH SCHOLARS IN INDIAN UNIVERSITIES

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### ABSTRACT

21st century is a competitive world where every student tries to achieve high status in their life. In this rat race students get extra stress which ultimately leads them to depression. There are certain loopholes in India education system which pushes the students into this rat race. Indian higher education system has many flaws which leads insecurity, instability, carrier unsettlement etc. among students. The current research papers focus on how stress has been managed by the research scholar of different universities in India. Basically, Stress is an internal or external constraint which changes the individual both mentally and physically. There are certain social facts like personal, social and academic etc which leads stress among research scholars. Sometimes Pending stipend, conflict with colleagues, academic load, failure of experiment etc. create stress among the research scholars which ultimately affect their physical and mental health and show symptoms like body trembling, high blood pressure, anxiety, restlessness, digestive discomfort, intolerance etc. They used various methods to counter stress like watching movies, talk to friends, talk to family members, listen music, read books, listen music, play games etc. The current research article focuses on sources of stress affecting research scholars, symptoms of stress and strategies of stress management which have been used by the scholars to cope up with stress during their research programme.

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### INTRODUCTION

Stress is an internal or external constraint which change the individual both physically and mentally. There is anonymity regarding the definition of stress. Certain renowned psychologist had given their definition. Stress is defined as "any factor, acting internally or externally, which makes adaption to environment difficult and which induces increased effort on the part of the individual to maintain a state of equilibrium between himself and herself and the external environment." (Richlin- Klonsky & Hoe, 2003, pp. 2-3). Stress is any factor that threatens the health of an individual or has an adverse effect on the functioning of the body" (Shaikh, et al., 2004). According to Selye, whenever equilibrium of human being is disturbed due to some external or internal factor is called stress. It is a condition which arises when a person is not able to mobilise the personal and social resources required for fulfilling his demands.

According to World Health Organisation (WHO), stress is a kind of change that causes physical, psychological and emotional strain. It is the response of body to other things that want attention or action. Each person in any corner of the world experiences some degree of stress. However, the overall

wellbeing of the person depends upon how they respond that stress. National Institute of Health (NIH) explain, stress as a physical and emotional reaction experienced by people when they encounter challenges in life. Acute stress is resolved easily whereas chronic stress lasts for a weeks or months which can cause multiple health problems to the person. Chronic stress increases the heart rate, muscle tension, increases blood pressure, stress hormones, oxygen consumption, increases glucose in blood stream etc. the word stress and distress are often used interchangeably. Some Psychologist regard stress and distress as the same concept but there are slight differences between these two terms. The distress is negative concept which means accumulation of stress and is harmful for a person. Distress is the more familiar form of stress.

#### Causes and Reasons

Stress leads to physical, mental and emotional changes. Stress can be created by biological, psychological, environmental and social factors. Stressors are the events that provoke stress. Stressors can range from physical problem to psychological problem like giving presentations or written exams etc. The stressor among the researcher can be the following: -

1. **Academics:** Improper guidance, unsuccessful results after number of repetitions, chaos created while

getting the paper published, workload of other unnecessary works of department etc. create stress and symptoms like insomnia, anxiety, depression, change in mood and loss of appetite among the scholars.

2. **Job insecurity:** Job stress is another big problem that youth is facing now a days. Job related stress negatively affect an individual's overall performance and wellbeing of body and mind.
3. **Time Management:** The age group of research scholar is volatile. Beside research work, they have to do other works also as they have entered the age of adults. So work load and ill management of the time increase the degree of stress among them.
4. **Financial burden:** The working age of research scholars is the peak time to earn money through different source but the scholars who are not getting any scholarship and are still dependent upon their family are more vulnerable to financial burden and stress.

The physical symptoms of stress are headache, neck and shoulder pain, back pain, heavy chest, lump in the throat, loss of appetite, stiffed muscle, indigestion etc. The behaviour and thoughts like worrying about the future, feeling life is too hard, having argument or clashes with others, building negative thoughts, jumping to conclusion, overgeneralization can be developed due to stress.

Psychological disorder caused due to stress can be depression, common anxiety, maladaptive behaviours, emotional strain and post-traumatic stress disorder, dysthymia and bipolar disorder.

According to **Korchin**, stressful situation can create because of various reason:

1. Ego - control failure
2. Ego -Mastery failure
3. Uncertainty and unstimulating
4. Informative overload
5. Danger
6. Self-esteem danger
7. Other esteem danger

The frequent currents of stress can lead to physical and emotional disorder. According to **Mckean et al.** (2000) emotional disorders create stress but synergy between stressor and attitude and approach of persons towards these stressors is more important. Mild stress makes the person more efficient and effective. It helps in boosting memory and sharpening mind and reflexes.

**Wolf et al.** identified examinations, class work and financial responsibilities as three main stressors. Harassment, bullying, ragging, medical morbidity, teasing etc are causes of stress which may inculcate deviant behaviour among the youth as they are not much mature to handle such situations. The person having same stressor may feel differently and have different effects on their health based upon the personal traits, social and cultural background, experience and coping skills that person carries. The environmental disasters like covid 19, landslides, flood, droughts etc. affects each and every section of the society and they entail stress among them. For example, Joshimath witnessed land subsidence resulting in cracks in some houses of town. The turbulence and uncertainty about the future are causing insomnia, anxiety and stress among the affected people.

Family pressure, high expectation from society, marriage pressure, peer pressure, unemployment etc. are the social factors creating stress among the research scholars. The level of stress varies from person-to-person nevertheless anxiety may be caused due to high level of stress or excessive stress, which disrupts the physiological and psychological health of a person. Stress can affect the various sections of society in different ways. The most vulnerable sections that can be affected are youth, women, older person etc. The assignment, examination fear, torcher, etc. are some of the reasons which creates stressful situation for the students. This can lead to their lower academic performance because of problems like insomnia, depression, anxiety, interpersonal conflict etc.

The research scholars face work related stress. It is created when the work demand and pressure presented among person did not match their intellect and abilities and challenge their abilities to cope up with it. Stress is unanimous in this contemporary work environment but it is often worse when the employees did not get required support from their supervisors and colleagues and as well as don't have control over their work processes. Slight pressure on research scholars may motivate them and make them alert about their work however excessive pressure make the things unmanageable which eventually result in stress. Stress among the research scholar can be created due reasons like poor management, poor work design, poor work organisation, unsatisfactory working conditions, and lack of support from colleagues and supervisors.

### Stress Management

Different research scholars have different views for management of stress. Managing the stress majorly depends upon coping strategies. For coping with the stress, efforts are required which in turn help to reduce negative emotions and to solve stress related problem. Problem focused efforts and emotions focused efforts are two types of coping efforts that are purposed by different researchers. Problem focused coping is aimed at altering the sources of stress and solving the problem. Emotion focused coping is aimed at decreasing the emotional distress that are largely linked with situation or environment.

Creative problem solving is another coping strategy to control the stress. The person having the skills of creative have more practical knowledge and social skilled rather than bookish knowledge solely and they develop these skills independently. They try to find solution to the present problem creatively. The entrance of the students in the college makes them more socialize and enhance their network of social group which increases their expectation and increases pressure of making friends and also enhance work load. Thus, it becomes important to learn how to deal with stress so that students can handle stressful situations. There can be number of ways through which students can deal stress. They can do meditation, mindfulness, yoga, physical training to relief their stress during examination. They should learn the habit of being patience, good listener, etc. Self-realization is important to sustain positive attitude and sustainable environment around youth. Food is another important aspect of mental wellness. The recreational activities revitalization of young people and also make them enthusiastic. All these activities contribute to the holistic development of the youth. Improper management of Physical, mental, social, educational, family and relationship

factors are the sources of stress and they increase the chances of perpetuating the stress.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The research is descriptive and explorative in nature. The sample of the study are research scholars who are pursuing their research in various private and government universities of India. The data has been collected through mailed structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was circulated through google form among 300 research scholars approximately, however 106 of them responded. Questions were framed according to the need of the study in order to cover all the objectives of study. All questions were mandatory for response.

**OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

1. To understand the concept of stress.
2. To study source of stress affecting research scholars.
3. To investigate the impact of stress among research scholars.
4. To know the strategies of stress management used by the research scholars to cope up with stress.

**Table 1** Socio-Economic profile of Research Scholars

Age Distribution	Number (N)	Percentage (%)
21-25	21	19.81
26-30	71	66.98
31-35	07	6.60
36-40	04	3.77
Above 41	03	2.84
<b>Gender Distribution</b>		
Male	57	53.78
Female	49	46.22
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Married	23	21.70
Unmarried	83	78.30
<b>Stream of Research</b>		
Science and Technology	44	41.50
Arts and Humanities	49	46.23
Commerce	10	9.44
Physical Education	03	2.83
<b>Family Type</b>		
Joint	35	33.01
Nuclear	64	60.39
Single Parent	07	6.60
<b>Earning Members of the Family</b>		
Self	17	16.03
Father	60	56.60
Mother	05	4.71
Both (Mother & Father)	17	16.03
Other Sibling	07	6.63
<b>Monthly Income of Research Scholars</b>		
No Income	22	20.75
Less than Rs 25,000	24	22.65
Rs 25,000 - Rs 50,000	50	47.17
Above Rs 50,000	10	9.43
<b>Nature of Institution</b>		
Government Institution	92	86.80
Private Institution	14	13.20
<b>Total</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 1 demonstrates the socio-economic profile of the research scholars. Total number of the respondents were 106. The data reveals that maximum respondents belong to the age group of 26-30 years i.e., 66.98% whereas 19.81% belongs to age group of

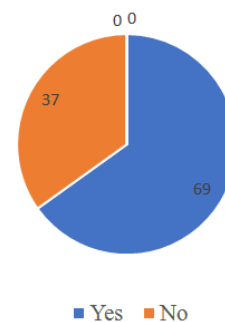
21-25 years, 6.60% belongs to age group of 31-35 years, 3.77% belongs to age group of 36-40 years and only 2.84% are above 41 age group. Maximum students belong to age group of 26-30 years because it is a high time for the students to pursue their research after completing their post-graduation. 53.78% were male respondents and 46.22% were female respondents. From the above-mentioned data, 78.30% of respondents were unmarried and 21.70% were married. Majority of the respondents were unmarried because they wanted to get job before getting married. The large number of respondents i.e., 46.23% respondents pursue their research in arts and humanities followed by 41.50% respondents from science and technology stream, 9.44% and 2.83% respondents continue their research in Commerce and Physical education respectively.

**Table 2** Avail Fellowship

Fellowship	Number (N)	Percentage (%)
Yes	69	65.09
No	37	34.91
<b>Total</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>100</b>

Further, Table 1 reveals the data regarding family type of respondents. Out of 106 respondents, 60.39% have nuclear family, 33.01% belongs to joint family and only 6.60% belongs to single parent family. Regarding earning members of the family, 56.60% responded that father is the only earning member of their family. 16.03% respondents said that they are the only earning member of their family followed by 16.03% respondents having both mother and father as earning members of their family, 6.63% of respondents having their siblings as main earning member of their family and only 4.71% respondents said that mother is the only earning member of their family.

High Number of respondents (47.17%) have their monthly income between 25,000-50,000 because most of them availed scholarships from different agencies to support their research work and some are teaching on lecture basis in different department. 22.65% of respondents have their monthly income less than 25,000 whereas 20.75% respondents have no monthly income because they don't avail any kind of scholarship to support their studies and they are totally dependent upon their family for financial support during their research work and only 9.43% respondent have their monthly income above 50,000. Apart from this, Table 1 tells us about the nature of institution where research scholars are doing their research. Majority of respondents (86.80%) pursue their research work in government institution and 13.20% of respondents pursue their research work in private institutions.



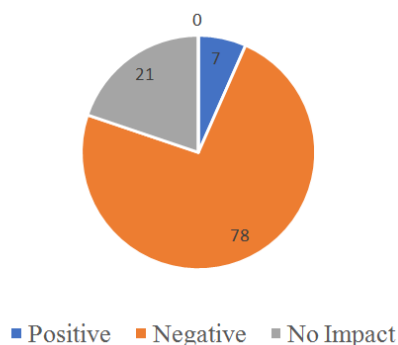
**Figure 1** Avail Fellowship

Table 2 shows the number of scholars availing fellowship. The data shows that 65.09% of respondents avail fellowship from

various sources and 34.91% of respondents don't avail any fellowship and they were totally depending upon their families for financial assistance.

**Table 3** Impact of Covid 19 on Research

Impact	Number (N)	Percentage (%)
Positive	07	6.60
Negative	78	73.60
No Impact	21	19.80
<b>Total</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>100</b>

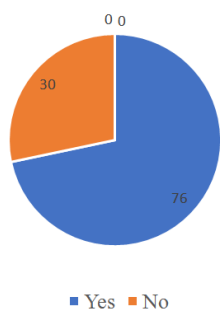


**Figure 2** Impact of Covid 19 on Research

Table 3 and Figure 2 shows the impact of Covid-19 on the research work. Out of total respondents, 73.60% believed that covid 19 had negative impact on their research work. 19.80% of respondents said that there was no impact of Covid 19 on their research work and only 6.60% respondents responded that there was positive impact of covid 19 on their research work.

**Table 4** Satisfaction from Ongoing Research

Option	Number (N)	Percentage (%)
Yes	76	71.70
No	30	28.30
<b>Total</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>100</b>

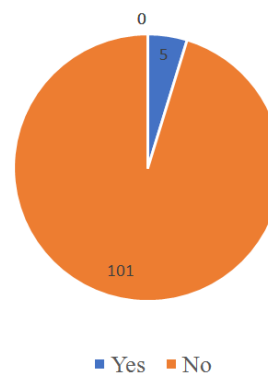


**Figure 3** Satisfaction from Ongoing Research

Table 4 and Figure 3 represents satisfaction level of research scholar with their ongoing research work. From the above data it is revealed that 71.70% of respondents were satisfied while only 28.30% of respondents were there who are not satisfied with their ongoing research work. Unnecessary work load by the institution, covid-19, wastage of time, delay in work etc. were the reason responsible for unsatisfaction among the research scholars.

**Table 5** Avail Loan

Option	Number (N)	Percentage (%)
Yes	05	4.71
No	101	95.29
<b>Total</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>100</b>

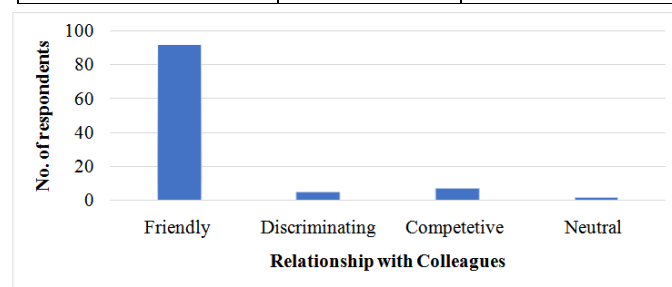


**Figure 4** Avail Loan

Table 5 and Figure 4 show the number and percentage of research scholars who availed loan. From the total respondents, 95.29% of the research scholars did not avail any loan while there were only 4.71% respondents who availed loan for their study purposes or any personal reasons.

**Table 6** Relationship with Colleagues or Co-Scholars

Options	Numbers (N)	Percentage (%)
Friendly, Cordial	92	86.80
Discriminating	05	4.71
Competitive	07	6.61
Neutral	02	1.88
<b>Total</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>100</b>



**Figure 5** Relationship with Colleagues or Co-Scholars

Table 6 and Figure 5 highlights the kind of relationship that research scholars have with their colleagues or co-Scholars. Majority of the respondents (86.80%) replied that they have cordial and friendly relationship with their colleagues followed by competitive (6.61%), discriminating (4.71%) and neutral (1.88%). The race of issuing more research articles, pleasing professors etc. made the research scholars more competitive whereas some take it in a positive way while some discriminate each other.

**Table 7** Relationship with Supervisor

Options	Number (N)	Percentage (%)
Good, humble	93	87.73
Exploiting, Harassing	04	3.78
Average	06	5.67
Confusing	02	1.88
Very formal	01	0.94
<b>Total</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>100</b>

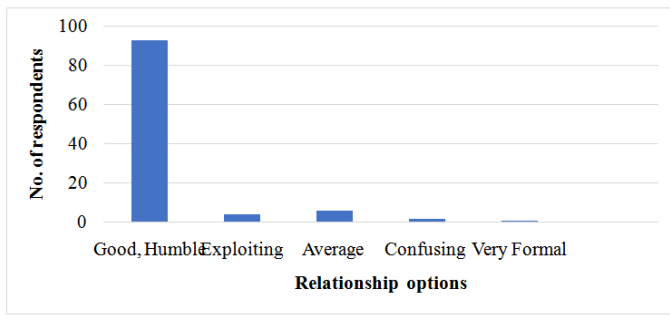


Figure 6 Relationship with Supervisor

Table 7 and Figure 6 represent the relationship of research scholars with their supervisor. The large chunk of respondents has good and humble relationship with their supervisor i.e., 87.73% followed by average (5.67%), exploiting (3.78%), confusing (1.88%) and very formal (0.94%) relationship. This shows that majority of the research scholars were happy and have cordial relation with their supervisors. Only few complained about exploitative relation.

Table 8 Accommodation during Programme

Options	Number (N)	Percentage (%)
Local residence	21	19.81
Hostel	56	52.83
Paying guest	15	14.15
Independent	14	13.21
<b>Total</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>100</b>

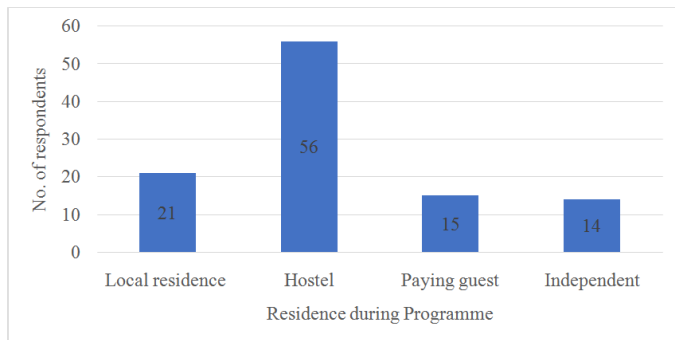


Figure 7 Accommodation during Programme

Accommodation of research scholars during their PhD is highlighted in Table 8 and Figure 7. Hostel (52.83%) was the most preferred accommodation of the research scholars followed by local residence (19.81%), paying guest (14.15%) and independent (13.21%).

Table 9 Factors leading to stress

\*Multiple options

	Number (N)	Percentage (%)
<b>Personal Factors</b>		
Parental Expectation	31	29.24
Career Settlement	85	80.18
Financial Problem	49	46.22
Homesickness	25	23.58
Relationship Problem	24	22.64
Health Issues	01	0.94
Politics at work place	04	3.77
Writing Research work	01	0.94
Mismanagement of time	01	0.94
Failure of Experiments	01	0.94

<b>Academic factors</b>		
Less vacation	41	38.67
Academic load	47	44.30
Unsatisfactory performance	42	39.62
Conflict with guide	08	7.54
Academic Exploitation	31	29.24
Lack of mental Independence	04	3.77
Less facilities for research	01	0.94
Pending stipend	03	2.83
Less option for job after degree	01	0.94
No academic factor	03	2.83
<b>Social factors</b>		
Unstable future	73	68.86
Family pressure	29	27.35
Marriage pressure	28	26.41
Peer pressure	25	23.58
Unemployment	67	63.20

Table 9 represents the various factors responsible for creating stress. Three important factors asked from the respondents were personal, academic and social factors. Career settlement (80.18%) was the biggest personal factor among the scholars creating stress followed by financial problem (46.22%), parental expectation (29.24%), homesickness (23.58%), relationship problem (22.64%), politics at workplace (3.77%), health issues (0.94%), writing research work (0.94%), mismanagement of time (0.94%) and failure of experiments (0.94%). Academic load (44.30%), unsatisfactory performance (39.62%), less vacation (38.67%) and academic exploitation (29.24%) were the main academic factors causing stress among the research scholars. The social factors responsible for causing stress were unstable future (68.86%), unemployment (63.20%), family pressure (27.35%), marriage pressure (26.41%) and peer pressure (23.58%).

Table 10 Symptoms of Stress

\*Multiple options

Options	Number (N)	Percentage (%)
Headache, Dizziness	44	41.50
Body Trembling	11	10.37
High blood pressure	12	11.32
Stiffed Muscle	16	15.09
Fatigue	36	33.96
Anxiety & Depression	50	47.16
Insomnia	39	36.79
Mental instability	30	28.30
Restlessness	55	51.88
Digestive discomfort	30	28.30
Bouts of anger	25	23.58
Impatient & intolerant	29	27.35
Sadness	47	44.33
Lack of motivation	49	46.22
Feel alienated	27	25.47
No symptoms	03	2.83

Table 10 explained about the symptoms of stress among the research scholars. Respondents faced various problem when

they are in stress. Out of all, restlessness i.e. (51.88%) is the major symptom of stress where research scholars were unable to stay still or calm. The second major symptom of stress among scholars were anxiety and depression (47.16%) followed by lack of motivation (46.22%), sadness (44.33%), headache, dizziness (41.50%) and insomnia (36.79%). These were some of the major symptoms of stress among research scholars. There were some others symptoms of stress like fatigue (33.96%), followed by mental instability and digestive discomfort (28.30%) each, impatient and intolerant (27.35%), feel alienated (25.47%), bouts of anger (23.58%) stiffed muscle (15.09%), High blood pressure (11.32%), body trembling (10.37%). There were only (2.83%) respondents have no symptoms of stress.

**Table 11** Methods to Counter Stress

**\*Multiple options**

Options	Number (N)	Percentage (%)
Watch movies	39	36.79
Play games	22	20.75
Gym/yoga	25	23.28
Talk to friends	66	62.26
Talk to family members	49	46.22
Listen music	65	61.32
Use internet	39	36.79
Outing/picnic	18	16.98
Read books	29	27.35
Use drugs	03	2.83
Shopping	26	24.52
Meditation	04	3.77
Writing poetry	01	0.94
Sleeping	02	1.88
Cycling	02	1.88
Very poor at countering stress	02	1.88

Methods of countering stress are represented by table 11. The research scholars replied number of ways to counter the stress. Maximum scholars talked with friends (62.26%), listened music (61.32%), talked with family members (46.22%), watched movies (36.79%), used internet (36.79%) to counter their stress. Other methods to counter stress were reading books (27.35%), shopping (24.52%), gym/yoga (23.28%), play games (20.75%), outing/picnic (16.98%), meditation (3.77%), used drugs (2.83%), sleeping (1.88%), cycling (1.88%), writing poetry (0.94%). While there were only 2 (1.88%) research scholars who stated that they are very poor at countering the stress.

## CONCLUSION

The present study discussed the concept of stress, sources of stress, impact of stress and the coping strategies used by research scholars. Majority of the research scholars were satisfied with their ongoing research but around 28.30% were not satisfied. Large numbers of scholars were having friendly and cordial with their colleagues or co scholars, and good, humble relationships with their supervisor. The major personal, academic and social factors responsible for stress were career settlement, academic load and unstable future respectively. The foremost symptoms of stress recognised by the research scholars were restlessness, anxiety, depression and lack of

motivation. Talking with friends, listening to music and talking with family members were the main coping methods used by the research scholar to counter the stress.

## Suggestions

There are no human beings in this world without stress. Each and every person have some degree of stress. However, some people have good tactics to deals with stressful situation while other are not able to manage the stress. Thus, following coping strategies should be followed to manage the stress:

1. To tackle emotional problems, concentrate on how you are feeling, slow down and connect with your body and try to refocus and engage with world around you.
2. Unhook yourself from the behaviour and thoughts that are creating stress among you.
3. Always try to converse with your colleagues and supervisors. It will reduce the misunderstanding and make stronger bond.
4. Be consistence and maintain a daily routine so as to manage the work and helps to deal with overburden.
5. Exercise regularly, have a balance diet, sleep at least for 8 hours are some of the habits which relax and rejuvenate your body and make your mentally, physically and socially active.
6. Deep breathing, meditation and mindfulness practices helps to relax muscles and make the person focused and produce stress alleviating effects as well as have positive effect on stress, anxiety and depression among people.
7. GREAT, a helpful practice to manage stress and anxiety developed by National Institute of Mental Health should be followed by the research scholars to manage their stress. It includes the practices of gratitude, relaxation, exercise, acknowledging feelings and tracking thoughts.

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