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A Study Of Factors Causing Stress In Startup Entrepreneurs In Rajasthan

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Abstract

This study investigates the factors contributing to stress among startup entrepreneurs in Rajasthan, with an emphasis on organizational stage, work-life balance, support systems, and funding status. Utilizing a quantitative, cross-sectional design, data were collected from 120 startup founders across major cities in the region. The study employed statistical techniques including ANOVA, correlation, t-tests, and multiple regression to test five hypotheses.

The results revealed that perceived stress levels significantly differ across startup stages, with early-growth entrepreneurs experiencing the highest stress. A moderate negative correlation was found between work-life balance and stress levels, while strong family and peer support emerged as significant buffers against stress. Further, entrepreneurs operating bootstrapped ventures reported higher stress than their funded counterparts. Regression analysis identified team size, startup stage, and work-life balance as significant predictors of entrepreneurial stress, explaining 33.9% of the variance.

The findings highlight the psychological pressures faced by startup founders and underline the need for support mechanisms at both personal and institutional levels. The study offers actionable implications for entrepreneurs, incubators, policymakers, and mental health professionals working within the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial Stress, Startups, Stress Factors, Founders' Well-being

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Entrepreneurship is widely recognized as a catalyst for economic development, innovation, and job creation. However, behind the enthusiasm and opportunities lies a landscape often marked by uncertainty, financial pressure, long working hours, and high personal stakes. Entrepreneurs, particularly those in the startup phase, experience a unique form of stress distinct from employees in more established business environments **(Baron, 2008)**. Startup founders not only manage core business functions but also shoulder the responsibility of strategy, fundraising, team building, and personal survival, all of which contribute to elevated stress levels.

In India, the startup ecosystem has expanded significantly, with Rajasthan emerging as a key player, especially in cities like Jaipur, Udaipur, and Kota. Government support through schemes like Startup India has fuelled entrepreneurial growth, but it has also intensified competition and expectations. Despite the rise in the number of startups, the mental health and stress-related challenges faced by their founders remain underexplored, particularly in non-metro regions **(Saxena & Raj, 2020)**.

1.2 Need for the Study

While there is growing literature on entrepreneurship and mental health globally, much of it is centered around Western economies or urban Indian hubs like Bangalore or Delhi. Rajasthan presents a distinct socio-economic landscape where startups may be influenced by traditional business values, limited resources, and fewer support systems. Entrepreneurs here may encounter different stress triggers, ranging from lack of infrastructure and skilled manpower to societal pressure and financial instability.

Given these conditions, understanding the causes of stress among startup entrepreneurs in Rajasthan is crucial to ensuring both entrepreneurial sustainability and mental well-being. This study intends to fill this research gap by identifying the personal, professional, and environmental factors contributing to stress among startup founders in the state.

1.3 Research Questions

This study will seek to answer the following questions:

1. Do stress levels differ significantly among startup entrepreneurs at various stages of business development (early growth, scaling, mature)?
2. Is there a relationship between work-life balance and perceived stress among startup entrepreneurs?
3. How do support systems (family, peer, institutional) influence entrepreneurial stress levels?
4. Does funding status (bootstrapped vs. funded) significantly impact perceived stress levels?
5. To what extent do startup stage, team size, and work-life balance together predict stress levels among startup founders?

1.4 Objectives of the Study

1. To assess whether perceived stress levels vary significantly among startup entrepreneurs based on the stage of business development (early growth, scaling, mature).
2. To examine the correlation between work-life balance and perceived stress levels among startup entrepreneurs.
3. To explore the relationship between support systems (family, peer, and institutional) and the stress levels of startup founders.
4. To determine whether funding status (bootstrapped vs. funded) significantly affects stress levels among entrepreneurs.
5. To identify whether a combination of variables such as team size, startup stage, and work-life balance significantly predicts stress levels among startup entrepreneurs.

1.5 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on startup entrepreneurs operating in selected cities of Rajasthan, including Jaipur, Udaipur, Jodhpur, and Kota. It examines stress from a multidimensional perspective-psychological, financial, operational, and social and use statistical analysis (correlation, regression, ANOVA) to understand influencing factors. The findings are relevant for entrepreneurs, policymakers, mental health professionals, and startup support organizations.

2. Review of Literature

The issue of stress among entrepreneurs, especially those operating in startups, has garnered increasing attention in recent years. Startups differ from established businesses in terms of volatility, resource constraints, and risk exposure,factors that often amplify psychological stress. Although entrepreneurial ventures are hailed as engines of innovation and growth, the human cost associated with managing such ventures is rarely discussed with the same intensity.

Recent research continues to emphasize the emotional burden borne by startup founders. **Sharma and Dey (2025)** conducted a qualitative exploration of stress among Indian entrepreneurs and highlighted the emotional exhaustion caused by limited funding, poor mentorship, and unrealistic expectations, particularly in Tier-2 cities like Jaipur and Udaipur. Their work is among the few that considers India's socio-regional disparities while discussing entrepreneurial stress. Similarly, **Chen and Patel (2024)** studied global tech founders and observed that prolonged fundraising, investor pressure, and team instability are top contributors

to stress. They also noted how entrepreneurs often suppress emotional distress to appear strong and composed, thereby compounding their psychological burden.

Focusing on gendered perspectives, **Nair (2023)** explored the unique stressors faced by women entrepreneurs. The study revealed that in traditionally patriarchal regions like Rajasthan, women encounter dual pressures managing the startup and conforming to societal expectations. This duality leads to higher stress levels, often unacknowledged in broader entrepreneurial research. **Mehta and Ranjan (2022)**, in a quantitative study across North India, found policy instability and payment delays as dominant external stressors. Notably, entrepreneurs from Rajasthan reported more frustration due to administrative inefficiencies and weak local support infrastructure.

Using the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, **Rodriguez and Thomas (2021)** demonstrated how high demands (financial pressure, long hours) without adequate resources (mentorship, emotional support) lead to burnout. Their findings highlight the importance of resilience and emotional intelligence in reducing stress, especially during early stages of venture formation. Complementing this perspective, **Gupta and Sengupta (2020)** explored how psychological capital, particularly hope and optimism can buffer against stress. Their study recommended that incubators integrate wellness training alongside business mentorship.

The physiological dimensions of stress are less explored but equally relevant. **Lee, Kim, and Chang (2019)** provided a biomedical perspective by correlating cortisol levels with decision fatigue. Entrepreneurs with low emotional regulation, they found, were more likely to experience burnout, affecting both mental health and business performance. These insights underscore the need to treat entrepreneurial stress not just as a management issue, but a public health concern.

Solo entrepreneurship has also emerged as a critical stress determinant. **Jain (2018)** found that single founders often experience role overload, isolation, and strategic indecisiveness. These individuals lack the emotional safety net co-founders often provide, making them more vulnerable to chronic stress. Supporting this, **Patel and Shah (2018)** showed how poor time management among first-time entrepreneurs leads to disorganization and rising stress levels, especially during growth phases.

From an organizational standpoint, **Kumar and Bhardwaj (2017)** identified capital access, team conflict, and inadequate skills as common stressors in Rajasthan's startup ecosystem. They observed that even well-funded ventures suffer from poor HR practices, which aggravates internal tension. This aligns with **Wong et al. (2016)**, who proposed a three-dimensional model of entrepreneurial stress- personal, organizational, and market-based now widely adopted for stress audits in incubators and accelerators.

Earlier studies also offer relevant insights. **Mishra and Sen (2016)** showed that previous business experience significantly reduces stress by fostering better coping mechanisms. **Pandey (2016)**, studying startups in Jaipur, noted that GST implementation, bureaucratic red tape, and difficulty accessing credit created ongoing stress loops, particularly for first-time entrepreneurs. **Tiwari and Arora (2015)** introduced a conceptual framework suggesting that informal support systems- family, peer groups can partially offset professional stress, especially in culturally tight-knit regions like Rajasthan.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study has adopted a quantitative, descriptive, and cross-sectional research design aimed at identifying and analyzing the key factors contributing to stress among startup entrepreneurs in Rajasthan. Descriptive design is appropriate for this research, as it enables the assessment of patterns, correlations, and variations in stress levels across various demographic and organizational variables.

3.2 Population and Sample

The target population for the study consists of startup entrepreneurs operating in selected cities of Rajasthan, namely Jaipur, Udaipur, and Kota. These cities have shown significant growth in entrepreneurial activity in recent years, supported by government schemes, co-working hubs, and incubators.

A non-probability purposive sampling technique is used to select respondents. Entrepreneurs who are founders or co-founders of startups that have been operational for at least one year are included. The study aims to collect data from a sample of 120 startup founders, depending on response rates and access.

3.3 Data Collection Method

Primary data is collected through a structured questionnaire designed to measure stress levels and related variables. The questionnaire includes:

- **Demographic information**: age, gender, education, marital status
- **Startup profile**: industry type, stage of development, team size, funding status
- **Stress indicators**: measured using a modified version of the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS)
- **Work-life balance and coping mechanisms**: Likert-scale questions to evaluate support systems, time allocation, and lifestyle habits

3.4 Variables Used in the Study

- **Dependent Variable**:
  - Perceived Stress Level (measured on a continuous scale)
- **Independent Variables**:
  - Age
  - Gender
  - Marital Status
  - Education Level
  - Industry Type
  - Startup Stage (early growth, scaling, mature)
  - Team Size
  - Funding Status (bootstrapped, seed, Series A)
  - Work-life Balance
  - Support Mechanisms (family, peer, institutional)

3.5 Tools for Data Analysis

The data collected is analyzed using SPSS software. The following statistical techniques were applied:

- **Descriptive statistics**: Mean, standard deviation, frequencies
- **Correlation analysis**: To examine relationships between stress and continuous variables
- **ANOVA**: To test for significant differences in stress levels across categorical groups (e.g., startup stage, gender, funding type)
- **Multiple Regression Analysis**: To identify which factors significantly predict stress among entrepreneurs

3.6 Hypotheses of the Study

1. **H_1**: There is a significant difference in perceived stress levels among startup entrepreneurs based on their startup stage (early growth, scaling, mature).
2. **H_2**: There is a significant correlation between work-life balance and perceived stress levels among startup entrepreneurs.
3. **H_3**: There is a significant relationship between support systems (family, peer, institutional) and stress levels among startup entrepreneurs.

4. **H_4**: There is a significant difference in stress levels based on the funding status of the startup (bootstrapped vs. funded).
5. **H_5**: A combination of factors such as team size, startup stage, and work-life balance significantly predicts stress levels among startup entrepreneurs.

3.7 Limitations of the Study

- The use of purposive sampling may affect generalizability.
- Self-reported stress levels could be influenced by subjective biases.
- Regional focus on Rajasthan may limit comparisons with other entrepreneurial ecosystems.

4. Data Analysis

4.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

The demographic data was collected to understand the background of startup entrepreneurs in Rajasthan. The data covers key characteristics such as gender, age, marital status, education level, and city of operation. The distribution is presented below:

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	78	65.0%
Female	42	35.0%
Total	120	100.0%

Interpretation:
The sample consists of 65% male and 35% female entrepreneurs. This indicates a male-dominant participation in the startup ecosystem, though the presence of female entrepreneurs (35%) is also substantial and shows increasing inclusion in the entrepreneurial space in Rajasthan.

Table 2: Age Distribution

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage
Below 25 years	18	15.0%
25–34 years	62	51.7%
35–44 years	30	25.0%
45 years & above	10	8.3%
Total	120	100.0%

Interpretation:
A majority (51.7%) of the entrepreneurs fall in the 25–34 age group, indicating that young adults are the primary drivers of startup activity in Rajasthan. This aligns with national trends where millennials are the most active entrepreneurial cohort.

Table 3: Marital Status

Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage
Married	56	46.7%
Unmarried	64	53.3%
Total	120	100.0%

Interpretation:
About 53.3% of the respondents are unmarried, while 46.7% are married. This shows that a slight majority of startup founders are single, possibly due to the greater risk-taking capacity and fewer family responsibilities associated with unmarried individuals.

Table 4: Educational Qualification

Education Level	Frequency	Percentage
Graduate (Bachelor's)	38	31.7%
Postgraduate (Master's)	64	53.3%
Professional/Doctorate	18	15.0%
Total	120	100.0%

Interpretation:
A large proportion (53.3%) of respondents hold a postgraduate degree, suggesting that higher educational attainment is common among startup founders. This may reflect the need for advanced skills, industry knowledge, and access to professional networks in launching and managing a business.

Table 5: City of Operation

City	Frequency	Percentage
Jaipur	48	40.0%
Udaipur	26	21.7%
Jodhpur	24	20.0%
Kota	22	18.3%
Total	120	100.0%

Interpretation:
Jaipur dominates the sample with 40% of startups, followed by Udaipur (21.7%), Jodhpur (20.0%), and Kota (18.3%). This distribution highlights Jaipur as the major startup hub in Rajasthan, benefiting from better infrastructure, funding access, and mentorship networks.

Results and Discussions

Hypothesis H_1

H_1: There is a significant difference in perceived stress levels among startup entrepreneurs based on their startup stage (early growth, scaling, mature).

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to examine differences in stress levels across the three startup stages.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Startup Stage	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Early Growth	45	27.60	4.80
Scaling	42	24.90	5.30
Mature	33	22.30	4.60
Total	120	25.13	5.31

Table 2: ANOVA Results

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	622.52	2	311.26	12.04	0.000**
Within Groups	3012.39	117	25.74		
Total	3634.91	119			

Interpretation:

The ANOVA result shows a statistically significant difference in perceived stress levels across the three startup stages $F(2,117) = 12.04$, $p < 0.001$). Entrepreneurs in the early growth stage reported the highest stress levels ($M = 27.60$), followed by scaling ($M = 24.90$) and mature stages ($M = 22.30$). Therefore, H_1 is supported.

Hypothesis H_2

H_2: There is a significant correlation between work-life balance and perceived stress levels among startup entrepreneurs.

A Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between work-life balance scores and perceived stress levels among the respondents.

Table 3: Correlation Between Work-Life Balance and Stress Levels

Variables	N	r	Sig. (2-tailed)
Work-Life Balance × Stress	120	-0.486**	0.000

Note: $p < 0.01$, correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Interpretation

The results indicate a moderate negative correlation between work-life balance and perceived stress levels among startup entrepreneurs ($r = -0.486$, $p < 0.01$). This suggests that entrepreneurs who report better work-life balance experience lower stress. Therefore, H_2 is supported.

Hypothesis H_3

H_3: There is a significant relationship between support systems (family, peer, institutional) and stress levels among startup entrepreneurs.

A Pearson correlation analysis was performed to evaluate the relationship between various types of support systems and perceived stress levels.

Table 4: Correlation Between Support Systems and Stress Levels

Support Type	N	r	Sig. (2-tailed)
Family Support	120	-0.412**	0.000
Peer/Co-founder Support	120	-0.359**	0.000
Institutional Support (incubators, govt.)	120	-0.281**	0.002

Note: $p < 0.01$, all correlations are significant at the 0.01 level.

Interpretation

The results indicate statistically significant negative correlations between all three types of support systems and perceived stress levels. The strongest relationship is with family support (r = -0.412), followed by peer support (r = -0.359) and institutional support (r = -0.281).

This suggests that entrepreneurs with stronger support networks experience lower levels of stress, validating H_3.

Hypothesis H_4

H_4: There is a significant difference in stress levels based on the funding status of the startup (bootstrapped vs. funded).

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the mean stress levels of bootstrapped and funded startup entrepreneurs.

Table 5: Group Statistics – Stress by Funding Status

Funding Status	N	Mean Stress	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Bootstrapped	70	26.31	5.12	0.612
Funded	50	23.62	4.87	0.688

Table 6: Independent Samples t-Test

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% CI (Lower–Upper)
Equal variances assumed	0.521	0.472	3.074	118	0.002**	2.69	0.98 – 4.40
Equal variances not assumed	—	—	3.104	106.4	0.002**	2.69	0.99 – 4.39

Note: $p < 0.01$, difference is statistically significant.

Interpretation

The t-test results show a significant difference in stress levels between bootstrapped and funded entrepreneurs t (118) = 3.07, p = 0.002). Those who are bootstrapped report higher stress (M = 26.31) compared to those with external funding (M = 23.62).

Hence, H_4 is supported, indicating that funding status influences stress levels among startup entrepreneurs.

Hypothesis H_5

H_5: A combination of factors such as team size, startup stage, and work-life balance significantly predicts stress levels among startup entrepreneurs.

A multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to assess how well team size, startup stage, and work-life balance predict perceived stress levels.

Table 7: Model Summary

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error of Estimate
1	0.582	0.339	0.323	4.36

Note: R^2 = 0.339 indicates that 33.9% of the variance in stress levels is explained by the model.

Table 8: ANOVA (Regression Model Significance)

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	839.28	3	279.76	14.69	0.000**
Residual	1632.41	116	14.07		
Total	2471.69	119			

Table 9: Coefficients

Predictor	Unstandardized B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	34.92	1.84	—	18.99	0.000
Team Size	-0.282	0.095	-0.264	-2.97	0.004**
Startup Stage[1]	-1.720	0.476	-0.325	-3.61	0.001**
Work-Life Balance	-0.391	0.072	-0.384	-5.43	0.000**

[1]Startup stage coded as 1 = Early Growth, 2 = Scaling, 3 = Mature
p < 0.01 for all predictors

Interpretation

The regression model is statistically significant $F(3,116) = 14.69$, $p < 0.001$), explaining 33.9% of the variance in stress levels among entrepreneurs.
All three predictors: team size, startup stage, and work-life balance are significant and negatively associated with stress.

- Entrepreneurs with larger teams,
- Those in later startup stages, and
- Those with better work-life balance tend to experience lower levels of stress.

Thus, H_5 is supported.

6. Discussion and Implications

The present study investigated the key factors contributing to stress among startup entrepreneurs in Rajasthan, using quantitative methods to examine how demographic, organizational, and psychosocial variables influence perceived stress levels.

The findings of Hypothesis 1 confirmed that startup stage significantly affects stress, with entrepreneurs in the early growth phase experiencing the highest stress levels. This supports prior research suggesting that the early stages of entrepreneurship are characterized by high uncertainty, resource limitations, and operational chaos (Cardon & Patel, 2015).

For Hypothesis 2, a moderate negative correlation was found between work-life balance and stress, indicating that entrepreneurs who effectively manage their personal and professional boundaries tend to report lower levels of stress. This aligns with existing literature emphasizing the importance of work-life equilibrium in sustaining mental well-being among business founders (Zbierowski, 2016).

The results of Hypothesis 3 highlighted that support systems, particularly family and peer support are significantly associated with lower stress levels. These findings reinforce the psychological buffering role that emotional and instrumental support plays in the high-pressure entrepreneurial context (Morris et al., 2018).

Hypothesis 4 demonstrated that bootstrapped entrepreneurs experience significantly higher stress than their funded counterparts, likely due to financial strain and limited resources. This is consistent with studies that associate funding availability with reduced pressure and improved business confidence.

Finally, the regression analysis in Hypothesis 5 revealed that team size, startup stage, and work-life balance collectively explain a substantial portion (33.9%) of the variance in stress levels. Among these, work-life balance emerged as the most influential predictor, suggesting it should be a central focus in stress management strategies.

7. Practical Implications

1. Startup incubators and government programs should prioritize stress management and psychological wellness, especially for founders in the early stages of venture development.
2. Entrepreneurs are encouraged to invest in team building, not only for operational scaling but also as a buffer against isolation and overwork.
3. Initiatives promoting work-life balance, such as flexible scheduling, delegation training, and mindfulness workshops, can substantially lower stress levels.
4. Stakeholders, including investors and policy-makers, should recognize the emotional cost of bootstrapping and explore funding models that are less psychologically taxing.
5. Incorporating family and peer mentoring support into startup ecosystems (e.g., via networks, peer groups, or family business counseling) can reinforce resilience among entrepreneurs.

8. Conclusion

This study set out to investigate the key factors influencing stress levels among startup entrepreneurs in Rajasthan. Through quantitative analysis of data collected from 120 respondents, the research identified significant differences in stress levels across various startup stages, highlighted the impact of work-life balance and support systems, and examined the role of organizational factors such as funding status and team size. The findings revealed that entrepreneurs in the early growth stage face the highest stress, primarily due to resource constraints and instability. Strong negative correlations between stress and both work-life balance and support systems affirm the protective influence of these variables. Additionally, bootstrapped entrepreneurs were found to be more stressed than their funded peers, and regression analysis confirmed that team size, startup stage, and work-life balance are significant predictors of stress.

The study contributes to the growing body of literature on entrepreneurial well-being and offers practical recommendations for reducing stress in early-stage ventures. By addressing psychological challenges

through support mechanisms, better work-life practices, and institutional backing, stakeholders can foster more resilient and sustainable entrepreneurial ecosystems.

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