

# Stress Less: Between a Rock and a Hard Place

## Objective

To study the means through which students at Texas A&M University at Qatar (TAMUQ) handle stress, and investigate potential methods Division Writing Center (DWC) can provide to support its students' wellbeing, in addition to analyzing the implications of such an initiative.

## Background

- There's more to writing centers than the name implies.
- They must and do live up to the responsibility of 'tutoring the whole person'.
- Emotional and mental pressure is inevitable in a university context.
- Stressors come in the form of report submissions and presentations, falling into the scope of writing centers.

## Introduction

As an engineering university, TAMUQ students are very well acquainted with the stress elaborate projects and strict deadlines bring to the table. The DWC can have a significant influence through the support it provides; technically, mentally, and emotionally. However, how far does this support extend? Is it effective? Are students making use of available resources?

## Methodology

For the purposes of this study, a short and direct survey was designed for students of all majors and ages (n = 35) to amass quantitative and qualitative data via self-reporting.

The collected data was then divided to be computed or categorized, enabling their graphical rendition for the former and subsequent analysis for the latter.

## Results

Key Points - Fig.1:

- The disparity between mid-semester and end-of-semester stress levels is negligible.
- Stress levels seem relatively high at all times, averaging at approximately 75%.

Key Points - Fig.2-3:

- 37.1% of students are more inclined to avoid coping with their stress.
- A significant portion, 42.9%, prefer to intersperse their routine to alleviate stress.
- Only 5.7% of students seek out external support systems, and that number remains the same when considering ideal coping mechanisms.
- 62.9% of students would rather just eliminate their stressors without addressing the causes of their stress.

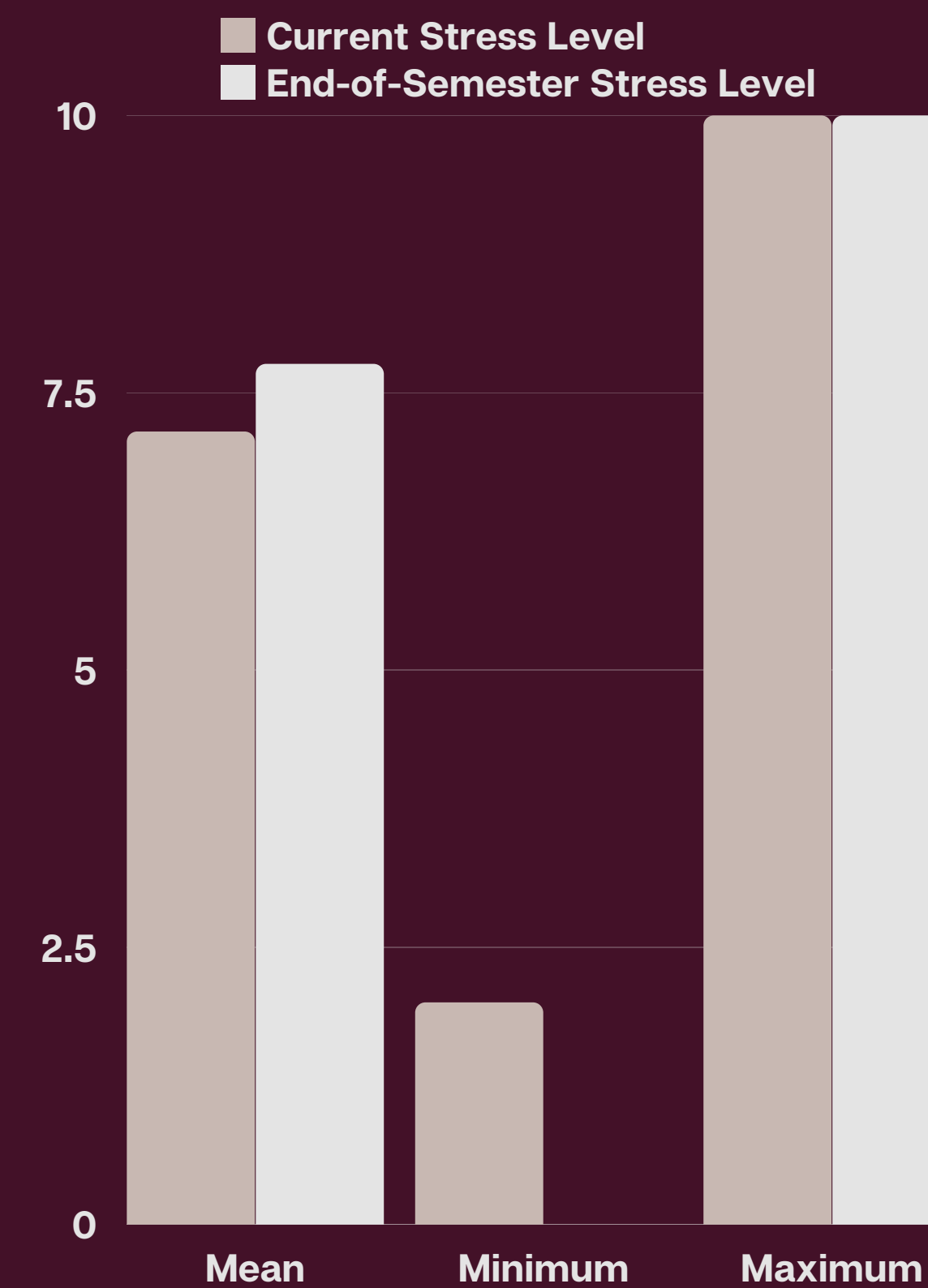


Fig.1 Students rate their stress levels mid-semester in comparison to what is expected at the end of the semester

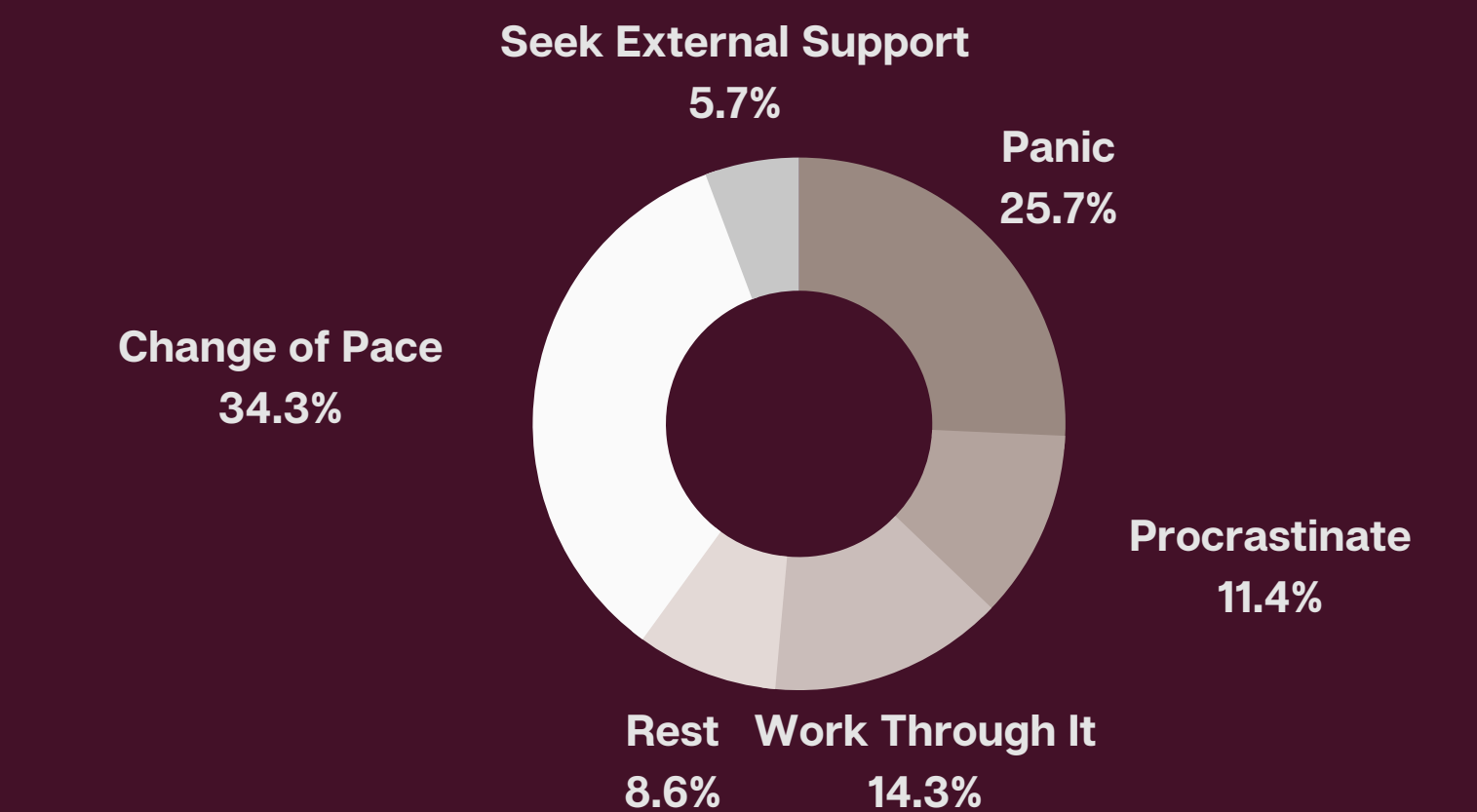


Fig.2 Students' current coping mechanisms with stress

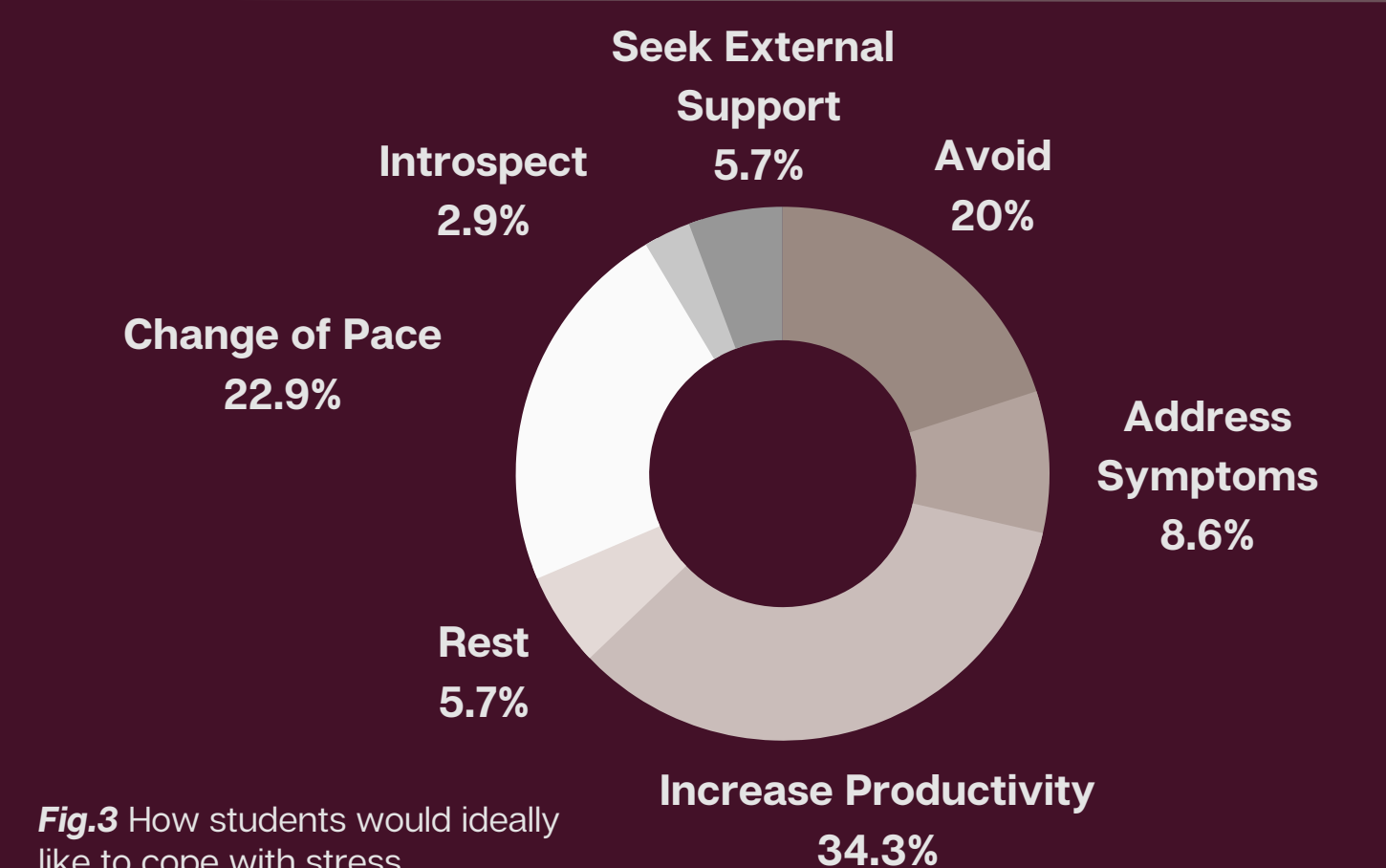


Fig.3 How students would ideally like to cope with stress

## Analysis

- Students seem to neglect any external resources when doing stress-heavy work.
- Most elect to cope with stress alone, whether healthily (e.g., changing scenery) or not at all (e.g., avoidance and panic).
- Could be rooted in:
  - Lack of awareness of resources.
  - Resources not being sufficient/efficient.
  - Limited time frame and fixed space DWC operates in.

## Conclusion

- TAMUQ students seem to want to directly eliminate their anxiety rather than the cause of it.
- A minority seeks out aid in establishing healthy routines.
- Observed precedence of short-term relief or gratification over more long-term solutions.
- Possibly out-of-sight nature of DWC and the services it provides.

## Implications

- Establishing students' preferred methods of coping with stress allows DWC to:
- Provide more targeted resources.
  - Normalize using a variety of on-campus locations for tutoring sessions.
  - Raise awareness of the flexibility and extended time frames of DWC.
  - Increase student outreach and marketing.
  - Hold routine workshops to emphasize healthy study schedules.

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