

Academic Stress among Higher Secondary School Students: A Review

Snehlata D. Ghatol

Ph. D. Scholar, Post Graduate, Dept. of Education, Sardar Patel University,
Vallabh Vidyanagar, Gujarat, India

Abstract

An attempt was made in this paper to review the literature on academic stress among the secondary school students and present the causes and symptoms of stress as well as coping mechanism for stress. The review of literature indicate that the reasons for stress during adolescence are because of disturbed family dynamics, peer pressure, inability to cope with studies, drug abuse, lack of competence. The involvement of adolescents in getting instant gratification of needs has led to lot of stress in them and in their relationships with family and peers. The students coming from joint families have slightly higher mean of academic anxiety score than their counterparts coming from nuclear families but this difference is not significant statistically. IQ and demographic factors are not key factor in academic stress among high school students. In order to overcome deviant behaviors, the parents play a constructive role in channelizing energies of the adolescents. Proper care should to be taken in helping to take the right decisions which may affect their future. Anxiety reduction and time management in conjunction with leisure activities may be an effective strategy for reducing academic stress in college students. Students should have the aspiration/expectation about their study, not beyond their capacities and abilities, Students need also proper counseling while selecting their courses at intermediate level. The parents should also consider the child's interest and aptitude and not impose on selecting the courses. The family environment should be congenial and the learning process should be made pleasurable and parents should avoid making it as a stressful event for adolescents. Author concludes that supportive and stimulating atmosphere is very necessary for the student to progress in their academic life and for reaching their aim or goal.

Key word

Academic Stress, Adolescence, School Students.

I. Introduction:

Higher secondary school education is a very important turning point in the academic life of the individual. It is similar of GCE (General Certificate of Education), a level of schooling in the countries like Great Britain. At this stage, the academic performance of the youth/adolescents plays a crucial role in deciding about next higher stage of education, and probably career too (Rosa and Preethi, 2012). Therefore, excessive stress during this stage could result in increased prevalence of psychological problems like depression and nervousness, which could ultimately have negative impact on the outcome of the achievements (Waghacharve, et al, 2013). Academic stress is mental distress with respect to some anticipated frustration associated with academic failure or even unawareness to the possibility of such failure. Students have to face many academic burden/load, for example, school examination, answering questions in the class, showing progress in school subjects. Understanding what the teacher is teaching, competing with other class mates, fulfilling teachers and parents academic expectations (Lal, 2014). These demands may tax or exceed available resources of the students. As a consequence, they can be under stress, since the demand is related to achievement of an academic goal. So, academic related to the achievement of an academic goal. Academic Stress is an important factor accounting for variation in academic achievement. It also contributes to major mental health hazards, problems both physical and mental stress related diseases. Stress makes a significant contribution to the prediction of subsequent student performance and act as a negative predictor of academic performance of student. With this background, an attempt has been made in this paper to review the literature on academic stress among higher secondary school in relation to certain variables.

II. Concepts

1. Stress

Stress is generally defined as the body's nonspecific response or reaction to demands made on it, or to disturbing events in the environment (Rosenham and Seligman, 1989; Selye, 1974). It is a process by which we perceive and cope with environmental threats and challenges (Myers and Health, 2005). Personal and environmental events that cause stress are known as stressors (Lazarus, 1990). Therefore, stress is simply defined as emotional disturbances or changes caused by stressors. Stress which promotes and facilitates learning is called good stress. An optimal level of stress can enhance learning ability (Kaplan and Saddock, 2000). On the other hand, stress which inhibits and suppresses learning is called bad stress. The bad stress must be prevented and avoided (Linn and Zeppa, 1984). It is noteworthy that the same stressors may be perceived differently by different students, depending on their cultural background, personality traits, experience and coping skills (Kaufman, et al., 1996).

Stress can also be defined as, any change in the body's equilibrium. Any negative stress is also known as distress. Distress occurs when while performing a task or throughout a day to day activity tension builds up, there is no longer any fun in it and there seems to be no relief. This may lead to poor decision making. The general characteristics of the person in distress are, over-aroused, tense, unable to relax, touchy, easily upset, irritable, easily startled, nervy, jumpy, fidgety and intolerant of interruption or delay. As mentioned earlier, excessive stress results in increased prevalence of psychological problems like depression, anxiety, substance abuse and suicide ideation (Bansal and Bhave, 2006; Arria, et al., 2009).

2. Academic Stress

In today's highly competitive world, students face various academic problems including exam stress, disinterest in attending classes and inability to understand the subject. Examination stress is the feeling of anxiety or apprehension over one's performance in the exams. It can lead to students being unable to perform to the best of their abilities in exams (<http://www.iitr.ac.in>). Academic stress is the major source of stress among adolescents and it may lead to low self-esteem. Many psychological problems such as depression and suicide occur as a result of low self-esteem (Nikitha, et al, 2014).

3. Higher Secondary School Student

In India, the combination of classes for different levels of school education/school stages differs from State to State. The combinations of classes of the school system constitute higher secondary stages comprising Classes XI-XII (<http://www.ncert.nic.in/>).

III. Review of Literature

A) Reviews of Studies conducted at International level

While studying the academic stress and health changes in female college students, Lesko and Summerfield (1989) found a significant positive correlation between the incidence of illness and number of exams and assignments, while Felsten and Wilcox (1992); Struthers et al. (2000) as well as Akgun and Ciarrochi (2003) found a significant negative correlation between the stress levels of college students and their academic performance. Lin and Chen (1995) also noted negative impact of academic pressure on students' intellectual, psychological, and physical growth. While Schafer (1996) observed that the most irritating daily hassles were usually school-related stressors such as constant pressure of studying, too little time, writing term papers, taking tests, plans, and boring instructors. Cheng (1999) noted that stress from high expectations of teachers, parents, and self is usually an agony for students studying in schools. Peach (1991) observed that academic class work, relationship with the opposite sex, concern about grades, feelings about personal appearance, pressures to succeed and achieve, test-taking, feelings about self-worth and personal respect, peer acceptance, relationship with friends, and problems at school were major stressors. Sarmany (1994) observed the higher level of stress in girls than boys and significant negative correlation between GPA and actual duration of sleep was observed. conducted extensive review of literature study on stress management in adolescents and tried to present the causes and symptoms of stress as well as coping mechanism for stress. Huli (2014) noted that disturbed family dynamics, peer pressure, inability to cope with studies, drug abuse, lack of competence are major reasons for stress during adolescence.

While exploring the academic stress and its management/coping mechanism, Mishra and Michelle (2000) found that time management behaviors had a greater buffering effect on academic stress than leisure satisfaction activities and significant gender differences existed among all the measures. Females had more effective time management behaviors than males, but also experienced higher academic stress and anxiety. Males benefited more than females from leisure activities. Struthers et al. (2000) noted that students who engaged in problem-focused coping were more likely to be motivated and perform better than students who engaged in emotion-focused coping. Tung

and Chahal (2005) examined the relationship between stress and adjustment and found no significant causal relationship between stress and the adjustment. Study results by Mathew and Jayan (2006) revealed that both the boys and girls experienced same kind of academic stress but there was no significant difference between them and similar types of copying mechanism was used to deal with academic stress. Leung et al., (2010) indicated that academic stress was a risk factor that heightened student anxiety levels and that parental emotional support was a protective factor that contributed to better mental health among children. However, paternal informational support delivered to children during times of high academic stress appeared to heighten student anxiety levels. Busari (2011, 2014) indicated that stress inoculation technique is an effective method of fostering adjustment to academic stress among university students.

B) Reviews of Studies conducted at National level

The study results of Kaplan et al., (2005) supported the hypothesis that early adolescent school-related stress both independently and in interaction with high academic expectations negatively affected academic performance. Hussain et al., (2008) observed that magnitude of academic stress was significantly higher among the public schools students whereas government school students were significantly better in terms of their level of adjustment. However, inverse but significant relationships between academic stress and adjustment were found for both the group of students and for each type of school, whereas Singh and Upadhyay (2008) observed that first year students experienced higher degree of academic stress in comparison of third year students and at the same time female students perceived more academic stress in comparison of their male counterpart. However, Agarwal (2011) found no significant difference between academic stress of male and female adolescents. Baviskar et.al (2013) noted that uncertainty regarding future, past academic performance, low self esteem may be all contributing to higher levels of depression, anxiety and stress. Jayanthi et.al (2014) observed that parent and teachers expectations were the main sources of academic stress among the adolescents, while adolescent girls had higher academic stress than boys. Joshi (2014) noted that second year students felt more stress in school factors than Ist year students. Rabbani et.al (2014) mentioned that there is a significant and negative relationship between parental attachment and stress, while Parbhu (2015) observed that students whose parent's education is as literate level, academic stress is higher than their counter part. Razia (2016) observed that adolescents of private schools have more academic stress than their counterparts in government schools.

While studying the methods of overcoming stress, Kumar et al., (2011) concluded that as stress level differs among the genders and therefore the methods cannot be the same for boys and girls, which should be based on the factors causing stress rather than any other basis and the parents and teachers associations in the schools can play a lead role. Kadapatti and Vijayalaxmi (2012) noted that students should have the aspiration/expectation about their study, not beyond their capacities and abilities and students need also proper counseling while selecting their courses at intermediate level. The parents should also consider the child's interest and aptitude and not impose on selecting the courses. The family environment should be congenial and the learning process should be made pleasurable and parents should avoid making it as a stressful event for adolescents. Author concludes that supportive and stimulating atmosphere is very necessary for

the student to progress in their academic life and for reaching their aim or goal. Kumari and Gartia (2012) noted a positive correlation between stress and academic achievement and are not mediated by gender. Sinha (2013) noted that adolescent can easily cope with their academic stress by using stress relief techniques, managing work, taking help from friends and counselors. Parents can also help their adolescents in overcoming academic stress by being supportive, paying attention to their wards' needs, having realistic expectations and teaching children to overcome obstacles and so on. Waghachavare et.al (2013) suggested that steps should be taken to incorporate stress management education in curriculum, while Bartwal and Singh (2014) suggested that in order to make adolescents stress free, there is a need to adopt better methods of teaching-learning. Dixit and Singh (2015) suggested that the teacher should understand the child psychology and should not over expect from the child.

IV. Conclusions

An attempt was made in this paper to review the literature on academic stress among the secondary school students and tried to present the causes and symptoms of stress as well as coping mechanism for stress. The review of literature indicate that the reasons for stress during adolescence are because of disturbed family dynamics, peer pressure, inability to cope with studies, drug abuse, lack of competence. The involvement of adolescents in getting instant gratification of needs has led to lot of stress in them and in their relationships with family and peers. The students coming from joint families have slightly higher mean of academic anxiety score than their counterparts coming from nuclear families but this difference is not significant statistically. IQ and demographic factors are not key factor in academic stress among high school students. In order to overcome deviant behaviors, the parents play a constructive role in channelizing energies of the adolescents. Proper care should be taken in helping to take the right decisions which may affect their future. Anxiety reduction and time management in conjunction with leisure activities may be an effective strategy for reducing academic stress in college students. Students should have the aspiration/expectation about their study, not beyond their capacities and abilities, Students need also proper counseling while selecting their courses at intermediate level. The parents should also consider the child's interest and aptitude and not impose on selecting the courses. The family environment should be congenial and the learning process should be made pleasurable and parents should avoid making it as a stressful event for adolescents. Author concludes that supportive and stimulating atmosphere is very necessary for the student to progress in their academic life and for reaching their aim or goal.

References

- [1]. Agarwal, ANJANA (2011). "Impact of Academic Stress upon Academic Achievement and Mental Health of the Adolescents, *International Journal of Management and Social Sciences*, Vol. 1, No. 1,
- [2]. Akgun Serap and Joseph Ciarrochi (2003). "Learned Resourcefulness Moderates the Relationship between Academic Stress and Academic Performance", *Educational Psychology*, Vol. 23, No. 3.
- [3]. Bartwal, Ramesh Singh and Anoj Raj (2013), "Academic Stress among School going Adolescents in Relation to their Emotional Intelligence", *International Journal of Innovative Research and Development*, Vol. 2, No. 11, November, pp. 417-424.
- [4]. Baviskar, Mandar P., Phalke, Vaishali D. and Phalke, Deepak B. (2013). "Depression, Anxiety and Stress: A Comparative Study in Arts, Commerce & Science Junior College students in Rural Area of India", *Global Research Analysis*, Vol. 2, No.11, November, pp. 183-185.
- [5]. Busari, A. O. (2011). "Stress Inoculation Techniques in Fostering Adjustment to Academic Stress among Undergraduate Students", *British Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, Vol.1, No. 2, September, pp. 229-243.
- [6]. Busari, A.O. (2014). "Academic Stress among Undergraduate Students: Measuring the Effect of Stress Inoculation Techniques", *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol. 5, No.27, December, pp. 599-243.
- [7]. Cheng, C. S. (1999). *Life Stress of and Guidance for Adolescents*. Taipei: Psychological Publishing Co., Ltd.
- [8]. Dixit, Mohit and Nirpal Singh (2015), "Academic Stress of School Students in Relation to their Self-Esteem", *Global Journal for Research Analysis*, Vol. 4, No. 3, March, pp.1-2.
- [9]. Felsten, G., and K. Wilcox (1992). "Influences of Stress, Situation-Specific Mastery Beliefs and Satisfaction with Social Support on Well-Being and Academic Performance", *Psychological Reports*, Vol. 70, pp. 219-303.
- [10]. Huli, Prerana. R. (2014). "Stress Management in Adolescence", *Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Science*, Volume 2, Issue 7, pp. 50-57.
- [11]. Hussain Akbar; Ashutosh Kumar and Abid Husain (2008). "Academic Stress and Adjustment among High School Students", *Journal of the Indian Academy of Applied Psychology*, April, Vol. 34, Special Issue, pp.70-73.
- [12]. Jayanthi, P.; M. Thirunavukarasu and Rajamanickam Rajkumar (2014). "Academic Stress and Depression among Adolescents: A Cross-sectional Study", *Indian Pediatrics Journal*, Vol.15, March, pp. 217-219.
- [13]. Joshi, Rashmi R (2014). "A Study of Stress Source among College Students", *Shikshannteel Marmadrushti*, Vol.6, No. 3, October December, pp. 61-63.
- [14]. Kadapatti, Manjula G. and A. H. M. Vijayalaxmi, (2012). "Stressors of Academic Stress - A study on Pre-University Students", *Indian Journal of Scientific Research*, Vol. 3, No.1, July, pp.171-175.
- [15]. Kaplan, D.S.; R. X. Liu and H. B. Kaplan (2005). "School related Stress in Early Adolescence and Academic Performance Three Years Later: The Conditional influence of Self Expectations", *Social Psychology of Education*, Vol. 8, No. 1, March, pp. 3-17.
- [16]. Kumar, N. Santhosh; S. Sujata and Parveen Jahira (2011). "Analysis of Stress among Higher Secondary School Students", *International Journal of Exclusive Management Research*, Vol. 1, No. 6, November, pp.1-10.
- [17]. Kumar, Sanjeev and J. P. Bhukar (2013), "Stress level and coping strategies of college students", *Journal of Physical Education and Sports Management*, Vol. 4(1), January: pp. 5-11.
- [18]. Kumaraswamy, Narasappa (2013), "Academic Stress, Anxiety and Depression among College Students- A Brief Review", *International Review of Social Sciences and Humanities*, Vol. 5, No. 1, pp. 135-143.

- [19]. Kumari Rajni and Radhakanta Gartia (2012), "Relationship between Stress and Academic Achievement of Senior Secondary School Students", *Asian Journal of Multidimensional Research*, Vol.1, No. 3, August, pp. 153-160.
- [20]. Lal, Krishan (2014). "Academic Stress among Adolescent in Relation to Intelligence and Demographic Factors", *American International Journal of Research in Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences*, Vol. 5, No.1, December-February, pp.123-129.
- [21]. Lesko, W.A. and L. Summerfield, (1989). *Academic Stress and Health Changes in Female College Students*, *Health Education*, pp. 18-21.
- [22]. Leung, Grace S. M., K. C. Yeung and Daniel F. K. Wong (2010), "Academic Stressors and Anxiety in Children: The Role of Paternal Support" *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 1, February, pp. 90-100.
- [23]. Lin, Jing and Chen, Qinghai (1995). "Academic Pressure and Impact on Students Development in China", *MCGILL Journal of Education*, Vol. 30, No.2, pp.149-168.
- [24]. Mathew, B and C. Jayan (2006), "Academic Stress and Coping Styles among Plus-two Students", *Indian Psychological Review*, Vol. 66, pp. 41-48.
- [25]. Misra, Ranjita; McKean Michelle (2000). "College Students' Academic Stress and its Relation to Their Anxiety, Time Management, and Leisure Satisfaction", *American Journal of Health Studies*, January, Vol. 16, No. 1, pp. 41-51.
- [26]. Nikitha, S.; Tessy Treesa Jose and Blessy Prabha Valsaraj (2014). "A Correlational Study on Academic Stress and Self-Esteem Among Higher Secondary Students in Selected Schools of Udupi District", *Nitte University Journal of Health Science*, Vol. 4, No.1, March, pp.106-108.
- [27]. Peach, Larry (1991). "A Study Concerning Stress among High School Students in Selected Rural Schools", paper presented at the Annual Education Conference, Cookeville, TN (United States), August 12, pp 1-12, Educational Resources Information Center, Document Reproduction Service No. ED 336253.
- [28]. Prabu Suresh P. (2015). "A Study on Academic Stress among Higher Secondary Students", *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention*, Volume 4, Issue 10, October, pp.63-68.
- [29]. Rabbani, Mohtaram; Sara Kasmaiezhadfad and Masoumch Pourrajab (2014), "The Relationship between Parental Attachment and Stress: A Review of Literatures related to Stress among Students", *The Online Journal of Counseling and Education*, Vol.3, No.1, pp. 42-50.
- [30]. Razia, B. (2016). *Academic Stress of Adolescents in Government and Private Schools*, *International Journal of Scientific Research*, Vol. 5, Issue 1, January.
- [31]. Rosa, M.C. and C. Preethi (2012). "Academic Stress and Emotional Maturity among Higher Secondary School Students of Working and Non Working Mothers", *International Journal of Basic and Advanced Research*, Vol.1, No.3, December, pp.40-43.
- [32]. Sarmany, Schuller Ivan (1994). "Load and Stress in School: Their Sources and Possibility of Coping with them", *Studia Psychologica*, Vol. 36, No. 1, pp. 41-54.
- [33]. Schafer, W. (1996), *Stress Management for Wellness*. Orlando: Harcourt Brace.
- [34]. Singh, A., and Upadhyay, A. (2008). "Age and Sex Differences in Academic Stress among College Students", *Social Science International*, Vol. 24, No. 1, pp.78-88.
- [35]. Sinha, Chanchal (2013). "Adolescents' Academic Stress", *Journal of International Academic Research for Multidisciplinary*, Vol. 1, No.11, December, pp. 529-535.
- [36]. Struthers, C.W.; R.P. Perry and V. H. Menec (2000), "An Examination of the Relationships among Academic Stress, Coping Motivation and Performance in College", *Research in Higher Education*, Vol. 41, No. 5, October, pp. 581-592.
- [37]. Tung, S. and N. Chahal (2005). "Relationship between Stress and Adjustment Adolescents Females; A Causal Study", *Journal of Personality Study and Group Behavior*, Vol. 25, pp. 19-31.
- [38]. Waghachavare, V.B.; V.M. Chavan; G.B. Dhumale; A.D. Gore (2013), "A Cross-Sectional Study of Stress among Junior College Students in a Rural Area of Sangli District of Maharashtra", *Innovative Journal of Medical and Health Science*, November – December, pp. 294 - 297.
- [39]. Arria AM, O'Grady KE, Caldeira KM, Vincent KB, Wilcox HC, Wish ED. Suicide ideation among college students: A multivariate analysis. *Arch Suicide Res*. 2009; 13:230-46.
- [40]. Bansal CP, Bhave SY. Stress in Adolescents and its Management. In: Bhave SY, Ed. *Bhave's Textbook of Adolescent Medicine*. New Delhi: Jaypee Brothers Medical Publishers, 2006. Pp.844-53.
- [41]. Rosenhan DL, Seligman ME (1989). *Abnormal Psychology*. 2nd edition, p. 463-4.
- [42]. Selye H., Harper and Row, (1974). *Stress without distress*, p. 12-3.
- [43]. Myers DG. *Stress and Health* (2005). 6th ed. In: *Exploring Psychology*. New York: Worth Publishers.
- [44]. Lazarus, R. S. (1990). *Theory based stress measurement*. *Psychological Inquiry*, 1, 3-12.
- [45]. Kaplan, H.I. and B.J. Sadock, 2000. "Learning Theory, In: *Synopsis of Psychiatry*": *Behavioural Sciences/Clinical Psychiatry*, 8th edn, 148-15.
- [46]. Linn, B. S. and R. Zeppa, 1984. "Stress in Junior Medical Students: Relationship to Personality and Performance", *Journal of Medical Education*, 59(1): 7-12.
- [47]. Kaufman DM, Day V and Mensink D. Stressors in 1st-year medical school: comparison of a conventional and problembased curriculum, *Teaching and Learning in Medicine*, 1996; 8 (4): 188-194.

Website visited

- [48]. <http://www.ncert.nic.in//>