

A STUDY OF EFFECT OF MENTAL STRESS ON ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF HIGHER SECONDARY SCHOOLS STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to identify and analyze the various factors associated with mental stress and to examine how these factors influence the academic achievement of high school students. Mental stress has become a critical concern in contemporary education, as adolescents are exposed to increasing pressures both inside and outside the classroom. Academic demands, social expectations, peer pressure, financial instability, and uncertainty about future careers are only some of the elements that contribute to stress during this formative stage of life. When left unaddressed, such stressors not only hinder learning and concentration but also impact students' overall mental health, behavior, and physical well-being.

Keywords: Mental Stress, Academic Achievement, Higher Secondary Schools Students.

Introduction

Adolescence is a critical developmental stage characterized by rapid physical growth, emotional changes, and cognitive development. During this period, students face a unique set of challenges. They are expected to balance academic expectations, navigate relationships, prepare for higher education or career paths, and establish personal identities. These pressures often manifest as stress, and when the coping mechanisms of students are insufficient, the stress becomes overwhelming.

Stress in adolescents is not confined to emotional experiences alone. It manifests through a combination of physical, psychological, and behavioral symptoms. Common physical symptoms include fatigue, headaches, disturbed sleep, and reduced appetite. Psychologically, students may exhibit signs of irritability, anxiety, low self-esteem, and even depression. Behaviorally, stress may lead to absenteeism, loss of interest in studies, aggression, withdrawal from social interactions, or resorting to maladaptive coping mechanisms such as alcohol and substance use.

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A wide range of factors contribute to the mental stress experienced by high school students. These factors may be broadly classified into **academic**, **social**, **personal**, and **environmental** categories.

Academic Pressure

The most commonly cited source of stress among high school students is academic pressure. Examinations, assignments, deadlines, and expectations to score high marks place an immense burden on adolescents. In competitive educational systems such as those in India, students are often under pressure not only from schools but also from parents and society at large to excel academically. Fear of failure and comparison with peers further intensify stress levels.

Relationships with Family and Friends

Family conflicts, lack of parental support, or overprotective parenting styles can significantly increase student stress. Similarly, peer pressure, bullying, or difficulties in friendships often result in emotional strain. Adolescents are particularly sensitive to social acceptance and rejection, making relationships a key factor in their mental health.

Time Management Challenges

Many students lack effective time management skills, which makes it difficult to balance study schedules with extracurricular activities, social life, and personal leisure. The inability to manage time often results in missed deadlines, reduced performance, and feelings of inadequacy, all of which heighten stress.

Social Media and Technology

In the digital era, social media plays a dual role. While it connects students with peers, it also creates pressure through constant comparison, exposure to unrealistic standards, and cyberbullying. The excessive use of mobile phones and internet addiction have been shown to negatively impact students' sleep patterns, focus, and mental health.

Financial Instability

Economic hardships faced by families may increase students' stress levels. Concerns about affordability of higher education, financial dependence on parents, or the need to contribute to family income create additional burdens for adolescents.

Uncertainty About Future Careers

The question of "what next?" often looms large for students nearing the end of high school. Pressure to choose the right career path, secure admission into competitive universities, or meet family expectations regarding future professions creates immense psychological pressure.

Mental Health Conditions

Underlying conditions such as depression and generalized anxiety disorder often coexist with academic stress. Many students fail to recognize the symptoms or do not seek help due to stigma, which further worsens their academic and personal lives.

Present research has been done on A Study of Effect of Mental stress On Academic Achievement of Higher Secondary Schools Students in which researcher has studied Effect of Mental

stress On Academic Achievement of Higher Secondary Schools Students with reference to gender and level of mental stress.

Statement of Problem

A Study of Effect of Mental stress On Academic Achievement of Higher Secondary Schools Students

Objectives of the Study

Following objectives were decided for the present study.

- To study the Academic Achievement of Higher Secondary Schools Students' relation to their gender
- To study the Academic Achievement of Higher Secondary Schools Students' relation to their level of mental stress

Variables under the Study

Following are variables for the present study

- **Dependent variable:** Academic Achievement
- **Independent Variables:** Gender: (1) Boys (2) Girls
- **Level of Mental Stress:** (1) Higher (2) Medium (3) Lower

Hypotheses of the Study

Following are hypothesis for the present study.

- H_{o1}** There will be no significant difference between mean scores of academic achievements of boys and girls.
- H_{o2}** There will be no significant difference between mean scores of academic achievements of students having High and medium mental stress.
- H_{o3}** There will be no significant difference between mean scores of academic achievements of students having medium and low mental stress.
- H_{o4}** There will be no significant difference between mean scores of academic achievements of students having High and low mental stress.

Limitations of the Study

Present study was delimited as below.

- Present research was limited for higher secondary schools of English medium of Bengaluru city only.
- Present research was limited for 11th standards students only.

Population or Universe

In the present research, the higher secondary schools' students of 11th standards of Bengaluru city were included in the population of the present study.

Sample Selection

Higher Secondary Schools were selected by stratified randomly sampling and Schools students were selected by using cluster sampling from each selected Higher Secondary Schools. In this way, sample was selected by using purposive, stratified randomly and cluster sampling, means multi-staged sampling.

Research Method

In the present study, the Mental Stress Scale for Higher Secondary School students in Bengaluru city was examined using the Survey Research Method."

Research Tool

In present research mental stress scale construction and standardization by Dr. B.K.Shah was used.

Techniques of Data Analysis

In present research for testing of hypotheses, coding was decided according to levels of variables and record sheet was prepared on excel. t-value was calculated in SPSS program.

Interpretation with Reference to Hypotheses

Sr. No.	Hypotheses	t-value	levels	Accepted / Not Accepted
1	H ₀₁ There will be no significant difference between mean scores of academic achievement of boys and girls.	1.94	0.05	Accepted
2.	H ₀₂ There will be no significant difference between mean scores of academic achievement of students having high and medium mental stress.	2.41	0.05	Not Accepted
3.	H ₀₃ There will be no significant difference between mean scores of academic achievement of students having medium and low mental stress.	1.65	0.05	Accepted
4.	H ₀₄ There will be no significant difference between mean scores of academic achievement of students having high and low mental stress.	4.77	0.01	Not Accepted

Findings of the Study

From the interpretation of the data, the researcher has established following findings.

There was no significant difference between boys and girls. So, Mean score of boys and girls students was nearly equal. Therefore, boys and girls students having same academic achievement.

There was significant difference between mean scores of academic achievement of students having high and medium mental stress. So, Mean score of students having high mental stress was higher than mean score of students having medium mental stress. Therefore, students having high mental stress having less academic achievement than the students having medium mental stress. This shows that higher level of mental stress is the variable which affects on academic achievement.

There was no significant difference between mean scores of academic achievement of students having medium and low mental stress. So, Mean score of academic achievement students having medium and low mental stress was nearly equal. Therefore, students having medium and low mental stress having same academic achievement.

There was significant difference between mean scores of academic achievement of students having high and low mental stress. So, Mean score of students having high mental stress was higher than mean score of students having low mental stress. Therefore, students having high mental stress having less academic achievement than the students having low mental stress. This shows that higher level of mental stress is the variable which affects on academic achievement.

Conclusion

In the present study, the researcher examined the effect of mental stress on the academic achievement of 11th standard students in Bengaluru city. The findings revealed a significant negative relationship between the two variables, indicating that higher levels of mental stress are associated with lower academic achievement. This outcome is consistent with the growing body of research highlighting the detrimental effects of unmanaged stress on adolescents' learning and overall development.

- **Stress as a Barrier to Academic Success:** Academic success requires focus, motivation, self-discipline, and effective time management. However, mental stress disrupts these essential elements. Students experiencing high levels of stress often struggle to concentrate during lectures, retain information, and perform well in examinations. Stress interferes with cognitive processes such as attention, memory, and problem-solving, all of which are critical to academic performance. For example, students under pressure may forget material they have studied thoroughly or fail to apply concepts effectively during assessments.

In Bengaluru, one of India's most competitive educational hubs, students are exposed to intense academic expectations from parents, schools, and society. Pressure to excel in board examinations, secure admission into prestigious colleges, and pursue high-paying careers in fields such as engineering,

medicine, or information technology creates a demanding environment. This constant push for academic excellence often translates into overwhelming stress that diminishes rather than enhances achievement.

- **Emotional and Behavioral Implications:** The study also highlighted that stress does not exist in isolation but is closely linked to students' emotional and behavioral patterns. Those with higher stress levels were more likely to experience anxiety, irritability, and feelings of helplessness. Such emotional disturbances reduce motivation to study and create a sense of disengagement from academics.

Behaviorally, some students adopt maladaptive coping strategies to deal with overwhelming stress. These include absenteeism from school, procrastination, or reliance on harmful substances such as alcohol, marijuana, or codeine. While such behaviors may provide temporary relief, they ultimately harm physical health, damage self-confidence, and contribute to declining academic performance. In severe cases, prolonged stress can lead to school dropouts, as students lose the ability or the will to keep up with academic demands.

- **The Competitive Educational Environment:** One of the key findings of this study is that the competitive nature of educational institutions in Bengaluru intensifies stress levels. Schools often emphasize examination results as the primary measure of success, leaving little room for creativity, personal development, or relaxation. Students compare themselves constantly with their peers, fearing judgment and failure. For many adolescents, the pressure to live up to the expectations of parents and teachers becomes overwhelming.

This competitive climate fosters a culture where stress is normalized, and seeking help is often stigmatized. As a result, many students suffer in silence, with their academic performance declining steadily until intervention becomes difficult. This reinforces the need for schools to create healthier learning environments that balance academic rigor with mental well-being.

- **Cognitive and Physiological Effects:** High levels of stress also affect students physiologically. Stress hormones such as cortisol disrupt the brain's normal functioning, impairing memory and learning capacity. Students under chronic stress often complain of headaches, fatigue, or sleep disturbances, all of which reduce their ability to focus on academics. Poor sleep, in particular, is directly linked to reduced concentration and memory retention, making it difficult for students to perform well even after extensive preparation.

On a cognitive level, stress narrows thinking, reduces creativity, and limits the ability to analyze complex problems. In subjects requiring critical thinking, such as mathematics and science, stress can severely hinder performance. Thus, the negative impact of stress is not limited to emotional well-being but extends directly to the cognitive abilities that underpin academic success.

- **Broader Implications for Students' Futures:** The findings of this study also carry broader implications for the future of adolescents. Academic achievement at the higher secondary level plays a crucial role in shaping career opportunities and higher education prospects. If stress is left unmanaged, it not only affects immediate examination results but also influences long-term career trajectories. Students who consistently underperform due to stress may lose confidence, develop feelings of inferiority, and settle for career paths that do not reflect their true potential.

Moreover, unmanaged stress during adolescence can create a lifelong pattern of poor coping mechanisms. Students who resort to avoidance, withdrawal, or substance abuse may carry these unhealthy behaviors into adulthood, leading to difficulties in higher education, employment, and personal relationships.

- **The Role of Support Systems:** The study underscores the importance of strong support systems in mitigating the impact of stress. Parents, teachers, and schools must play active roles in helping students manage stress effectively. Parents should avoid setting unrealistic expectations and instead encourage balanced lifestyles that include rest, hobbies, and emotional well-being. Teachers need to be sensitive to the signs of stress and adopt flexible teaching strategies that reduce unnecessary academic pressure.

Schools, in particular, must integrate mental health awareness into their curricula. Establishing counseling centers, conducting workshops on time management and coping strategies, and creating peer-support groups can significantly reduce stress levels among students. Recognizing that academic

excellence should not come at the cost of mental health is a crucial step in improving both performance and well-being.

The results of the present research clearly demonstrate that higher levels of mental stress negatively affect the academic achievement of 11th standard students in Bengaluru. Stress impairs concentration, reduces motivation, disrupts learning processes, and contributes to emotional and behavioral problems that further undermine academic performance. If left unaddressed, stress can lead to absenteeism, school dropouts, and even long-term psychological harm.

These findings call for immediate attention from educators, parents, and policymakers. By acknowledging the detrimental effects of stress and implementing proactive strategies to manage it, stakeholders can create a supportive environment that fosters both academic excellence and emotional well-being. Ultimately, the goal should not be to eliminate stress entirely—since some level of stress can be motivating—but to equip students with the coping skills and support systems needed to handle challenges constructively.

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