

A Study of Academic Stress among Intermediate Students in Vijayawada

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Abstract - Academic stress is an important concern among Intermediate students because this stage involves academic competition, examinations, career decisions and expectations from parents and teachers. The present study was conducted to examine academic stress among Intermediate students in Vijayawada. The study adopted a descriptive survey method. A sample of 200 Intermediate students was selected, comprising 92 male and 108 female students, with 34 Arts and 166 Science students. Academic stress was measured using a 36-item Academic Stress Questionnaire (ASQ) with a four-point response scale. The data were analysed using frequency, percentage, Mean, Standard Deviation and independent samples *t*-test. The overall mean academic stress score was 66.23 (SD = 18.76). The findings showed that female students ($M = 67.21$) had slightly higher academic stress than male students ($M = 65.08$); however, the difference was not statistically significant ($t = -0.802, p = .424$). In contrast, Science students ($M = 68.42$) reported significantly higher academic stress than Arts students ($M = 55.55$), with a statistically significant difference ($t = -3.765, p < .001$). Career concerns, transport-related difficulties, homework and fear of failure in competitive examinations were among the important areas of stress reported by the students. The findings highlight the need for effective career guidance, academic counselling, stress-management programmes and supportive educational practices, particularly for students experiencing greater academic pressure.

Keywords: Academic Stress, Intermediate Students, Gender, Study Stream, Science Students, Arts Students, Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh.

1. INTRODUCTION

Education plays an important role in the development of an individual and society. It provides knowledge, skills, values and opportunities for personal and professional development. At the same time, the educational process can place considerable pressure on students, particularly when they are expected to achieve high marks, complete academic work within limited time and prepare for competitive examinations. Such pressure may lead to academic stress. Academic stress has become an important concern in the field of education because prolonged academic pressure may influence students' concentration, motivation, emotional well-being and academic performance. Academic stress can be understood as the stress experienced by students when they feel that the demands of their academic environment are difficult to manage. Examinations, homework, assignments, competition with peers, fear of failure, parental expectations, teacher expectations and uncertainty about future education and employment are some of the common sources of academic stress. The experience of stress differs from one student to another depending on individual characteristics and the educational environment. The Intermediate stage is particularly important in the Indian educational system. Students at this stage are generally in late adolescence and are preparing for higher education and future careers. They have to manage regular classroom learning, internal examinations, practical work, assignments and public examinations. Many students also prepare for competitive examinations for professional courses. As a result, the Intermediate period can involve considerable academic competition and pressure. In Andhra Pradesh, Intermediate education has a strong connection with students' future educational and career opportunities. Students and their parents often place considerable importance on performance in Intermediate examinations and entrance examinations. The pressure to obtain high marks may become greater when students compete for admission to professional courses. Career uncertainty can also add to students' academic concerns. Therefore, understanding academic stress among Intermediate students is important for teachers, parents, educational institutions and counsellors. Previous studies conducted in Andhra Pradesh have highlighted academic stress among Intermediate students. Sumalatha's study among senior Intermediate students in Chittoor district reported differences in academic stress according to gender and study stream, with female students and Science students reporting higher levels of stress. Similarly, Paparao and Armuthavalli Devi examined academic

stress among Intermediate students in Guntur, Prakasam and Nellore districts and reported differences in academic stress across selected student characteristics. Studies conducted in the Krishna district have also reported higher academic stress among Science students compared with Arts students. These findings indicate that academic stress is an important issue among Intermediate students in Andhra Pradesh.

However, findings relating to gender and study stream are not always consistent across different studies and educational settings. Differences may arise because of variations in geographical location, type of institution, academic environment, sample characteristics, examination practices and the sources of pressure experienced by students. Therefore, there is a need for studies that examine academic stress within specific local educational contexts. Vijayawada is an important educational centre in Andhra Pradesh, with a large number of Intermediate colleges and students preparing for higher education and competitive examinations. Students in this setting may experience academic pressure related to examinations, workload, competition, career choices and expectations from parents and teachers. A study focusing on Intermediate students in Vijayawada can therefore provide useful local evidence regarding their academic stress. The present study was undertaken to examine academic stress among Intermediate students in Vijayawada. The study included 200 Intermediate students and considered gender and study stream as the selected demographic variables. The study specifically examines whether academic stress differs between male and female students and between Arts and Science students. Understanding these differences may help educational institutions and counsellors develop appropriate academic guidance and stress-management programmes for Intermediate students. The study is also relevant because the data collected from the students provide an opportunity to identify the major areas contributing to academic stress. In the present dataset, concerns relating to future career or employment, transport, homework, working notes and competitive examinations emerged as important areas of stress. Such findings can help teachers and parents understand that students' academic stress may arise not only from examinations but also from wider educational and career-related concerns. Thus, the present study attempts to contribute to the existing literature by examining academic stress among Intermediate students in Vijayawada and by analysing the role of gender and study stream. The findings may provide useful information for improving academic support, counselling services and student-friendly practices at the Intermediate level.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The review of related literature was organised according to the major variables of the present study, namely academic stress, gender and study stream. Greater emphasis was given to Indian studies, with particular attention to research conducted among Intermediate and senior secondary students and studies from Andhra Pradesh.

2.1. Academic Stress among Intermediate and Senior Secondary Students

Paparao and Armuthavalli Devi (2021) studied academic stress among 1,200 Intermediate students from Guntur, Prakasam and Nellore districts of Andhra Pradesh. The study examined stress in relation to gender, management and locality and showed that academic stress was an important concern among Intermediate students.

Ravichandiran and Selvaraj (2024) studied academic stress among 753 higher secondary students in Tamil Nadu. The study found higher stress among female and rural students and recommended counselling, stress-management programmes and mindfulness practices in schools.

Sharma and Saini (2025) studied academic stress, emotional intelligence and social support among 200 senior secondary students. The study found significant differences between Science and Commerce students, highlighting the importance of study stream in understanding academic stress.

Gogoi (2025) studied academic stress and academic performance among 250 higher secondary students in Assam. The study found a significant gender difference, with female students reporting higher academic stress. The findings highlight the importance of studying academic stress among higher secondary students.

Jain, Sharma and Jain (2025) examined academic stress among adolescents and discussed the burden created by academic demands and expectations. Their work highlights the importance of understanding academic stress as part of adolescent well-being rather than viewing it only as an educational performance issue.

Rashmi and Shafiq (2026) studied academic stress and emotional maturity among 240 adolescents in Faridabad. The study found significant effects of academic stream, gender and locality on academic stress, showing that students' demographic and educational characteristics can influence their stress levels.

2.2. Academic Stress and Gender

Gender is one of the commonly examined demographic variables in studies of academic stress. Research findings, however, are not completely consistent across different populations and educational settings.

Paparao and Armuthavalli Devi (2021) also examined gender differences among Intermediate students in Andhra Pradesh. Their large-scale study involving 1,200 students from Guntur, Prakasam and Nellore districts provides regional evidence for examining gender as an important factor in academic stress.

Ravichandiran and Selvaraj (2024) reported higher academic stress among female higher secondary students in their Tamil Nadu sample. Their findings support the view that gender may influence the way students experience academic demands.

Ruby and Kumari (2025) examined academic stress among 120 adolescents in Ranchi and considered both gender and family structure. The study reported significantly higher academic stress among female students than male students. The authors suggested the importance of gender-sensitive academic counselling and emotional support.

Gogoi (2025) also found a significant gender difference among higher secondary students in Assam, with female students reporting higher academic stress.

Rashmi and Shafiq (2026) found that gender had a significant effect on academic stress when considered along with academic stream and locale. This indicates that gender differences may depend on the wider educational and social context in which students study.

2.3. Academic Stress and Study Stream

Study stream is another important variable in research on academic stress, particularly at the Intermediate and senior secondary levels. Students selecting Science streams may experience additional academic demands because of subject difficulty, competitive examinations and expectations related to professional careers.

Pavani (2018) also reported a significant difference between Science and Arts groups among 500 Intermediate students in Krishna district. Science students experienced greater stress than Arts students. The study further identified lack of confidence and difficulty in completing assignments on time as important sources of stress.

Chaudhary, Salvi and Detha (2024) studied academic stress among 90 Class XII students from Arts, Commerce and Science streams. The study found significant differences in academic stress across the three streams, with Science students reporting the highest level of stress.

Sharma and Saini (2025) compared Science and Commerce senior secondary students and found significant differences in academic stress between the two streams. Their findings suggest that the academic environment and demands associated with different streams may influence students' stress levels.

Rashmi and Shafiq (2026) examined professional and non-professional streams among adolescents and reported a significant effect of academic stream on academic stress. Their study provides recent evidence that the type of academic programme can influence students' experience of academic pressure.

3. NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The Intermediate stage is a critical period in the educational development of students. Students have to balance regular college work, examinations, assignments and preparation for future educational opportunities. For many students, academic success is considered an important condition for entering professional courses or obtaining admission to reputed institutions. The present study is significant because it provides empirical information about academic stress among Intermediate students in Vijayawada.

The study may be useful to:

- Students, by helping them understand the sources of academic pressure.
- Teachers, by identifying the need for supportive teaching practices.
- Parents, by helping them understand the academic pressures experienced by their children.

- Counsellors, by providing information for planning stress-management programmes.
- Junior colleges, by helping them develop student-support systems.
- Researchers, by providing local evidence for further research on academic stress in Andhra Pradesh.

4. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

“A Study of Academic Stress among Intermediate Students in Vijayawada”

5. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study was undertaken with the following objectives:

1. To study the level of academic stress among Intermediate students in Vijayawada.
2. To find out whether there is a significant difference in academic stress between male and female Intermediate students.
3. To find out whether there is a significant difference in academic stress between Arts and Science Intermediate students.

6. HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

The following null hypotheses were formulated:

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the level of academic stress among Intermediate students in Vijayawada.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in academic stress between male and female Intermediate students.

H₀₃: There is no significant difference in academic stress between Arts and Science Intermediate students.

7. VARIABLES OF THE STUDY

The present study considered academic stress as the main dependent variable. Academic stress refers to the level of pressure and tension experienced by Intermediate students due to academic demands and related educational situations. Gender and study stream were considered as the selected demographic variables. Gender was classified into male and female, while study stream was classified into Arts and Science. The study examined academic stress among Intermediate students in relation to these two demographic variables.

8. OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF ACADEMIC STRESS

Academic Stress: In the present study, academic stress refers to the level of stress experienced by Intermediate students due to academic demands such as examinations, homework, study workload, fear of failure, competitive examinations, career concerns, parental expectations and other educational-related pressures. It is measured through the 36-item Academic Stress Questionnaire (ASQ) used in the study, with higher scores indicating greater academic stress.

Intermediate Students: In the present study, Intermediate students refer to students studying at the Intermediate level in selected junior colleges in Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh.

Gender: In the present study, gender refers to the students' classification as male or female.

Study Stream: In the present study, study stream refers to the academic stream pursued by the students at the Intermediate level, classified into Arts and Science.

Vijayawada: In the present study, Vijayawada refers to the geographical area from which the selected Intermediate students were included in the sample.

9. METHODOLOGY

9.1 Research Method

The descriptive survey method was adopted for the present investigation. The method was considered appropriate as the study aimed to examine the level of academic stress among Intermediate students and to determine whether academic stress differed with respect to selected demographic variables, namely gender and study stream.

9.2 Population

The population of the study consisted of Intermediate students studying in junior colleges in Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh.

9.3 Sample

The sample consisted of 200 Intermediate students. The students were classified according to gender and study stream. The distribution of the sample is presented in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1: Distribution of the Sample according to Gender

Gender	Number	Percentage
Male	92	46.0
Female	108	54.0
Total	200	100.0

Table 1 shows that out of the 200 Intermediate students, 92 (46.0%) were male and 108 (54.0%) were female. Thus, female students constituted a slightly larger proportion of the sample.

Table 2: Distribution of the Sample according to Study Stream

Study Stream	Number	Percentage
Arts	34	17.0
Science	166	83.0
Total	200	100.0

Table 2 shows that 34 (17.0%) students belonged to the Arts stream and 166 (83.0%) belonged to the Science stream. Thus, the sample contained a substantially larger proportion of Science students than Arts students.

9.4 Research Tool

The Academic Stress Questionnaire (ASQ) was used to assess the academic stress experienced by the Intermediate students. The questionnaire consisted of 36 items. Each item was rated on a four-point response scale ranging from *No Stress at All* to *Extreme Stress*.

Response	Score
No Stress at All	1
Slight Stress	2
A Lot of Stress	3
Extreme Stress	4

The possible total score ranges from 36 to 144, with higher scores indicating a higher level of academic stress. The questionnaire covered different aspects related to students' academic experiences, including career concerns, examination-related worries, fear of failure, homework, classroom difficulties, career guidance, parental expectations, study-related difficulties, academic facilities, academic workload, and transport and environmental concerns. The internal consistency of the 36-item questionnaire was examined using Cronbach's alpha. The obtained reliability coefficient was approximately 0.913, indicating a high level of internal consistency among the items of the questionnaire in the present sample.

9.5 Data Cleaning and Scoring

Before statistical analysis, the collected data were carefully examined for completeness and consistency. A few responses in the dataset were recorded as 0, although the Academic Stress Questionnaire uses a four-point scoring system ranging from 1 to 4. Since 0 is not a valid response category, these entries were treated as missing values rather than as valid responses. For students with missing or invalid responses, the academic stress score was calculated using a 36-item prorated scoring procedure. This procedure prevented invalid zero responses from artificially lowering the students' total academic stress scores. The resulting scores were used for the subsequent statistical analysis.

9.6 Statistical Techniques

The collected data were organised, coded and statistically analysed. The following statistical techniques were used:

1. Frequency and Percentage were used to describe the distribution of students according to gender and study stream.
2. Mean was used to determine the average academic stress score of the students.
3. Standard Deviation was used to examine the variation in academic stress scores.
4. Independent Samples *t*-test was used to determine whether significant differences existed in academic stress between male and female students and between Arts and Science students.

The level of significance was fixed at 0.05 for testing the hypotheses.

10. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

The data collected from 200 Intermediate students were analysed in accordance with the objectives and hypotheses of the study. Mean, Standard Deviation and independent samples *t*-test were used. The results are presented below.

10.1 Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the level of academic stress among Intermediate students in Vijayawada.

Since this hypothesis concerns the overall level of academic stress, the Mean and Standard Deviation were used to describe the academic stress scores of the students.

Table 3: Overall Academic Stress among Intermediate Students

Variable	N	Mean	SD
Academic Stress	200	66.23	18.76

Interpretation

The above table shows that the mean academic stress score of the 200 Intermediate students was 66.23, with a standard deviation of 18.76. The findings indicate variation in the academic stress experienced by the students. The overall mean score suggests that the students, as a group, experienced a measurable level of academic stress. However, individual students differed considerably in their reported stress levels, as indicated by the standard deviation.

10.2 Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in academic stress between male and female Intermediate students.

Table 4: Difference in Academic Stress according to Gender

Gender	N	Mean	SD	<i>t</i> -value	<i>p</i> -value	Result
Male	92	65.08	19.79	-0.802	.424	Not Significant

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value	Result
Female	108	67.21	17.87			

Interpretation

The mean academic stress score of male Intermediate students was 65.08, with a standard deviation of 19.79, whereas female students obtained a mean score of 67.21, with a standard deviation of 17.87. The obtained t -value was -0.802, with a p -value of .424. Since the p -value is greater than 0.05, the difference between male and female students is not statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis H_{02} is accepted. It is concluded that there is no significant difference in academic stress between male and female Intermediate students. Although female students obtained a slightly higher mean academic stress score than male students, the difference was not statistically significant.

10.3 Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference in academic stress between Arts and Science Intermediate students.

Table 5: Difference in Academic Stress according to Study Stream

Study Stream	N	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value	Result
Arts	34	55.55	19.53	-3.765	< .001	Significant
Science	166	68.42	17.88			

Interpretation

The mean academic stress score of Arts students was 55.55, with a standard deviation of 19.53, whereas Science students obtained a considerably higher mean score of 68.42, with a standard deviation of 17.88. The obtained t -value was -3.765, and the p -value was less than .001. Since the p -value is less than 0.05, the difference between Arts and Science students is statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis H_{03} is rejected. It is concluded that there is a significant difference in academic stress between Arts and Science Intermediate students. The findings show that Science students experienced significantly higher academic stress than Arts students in the present sample.

11. MAJOR FINDINGS

The major findings of the present study are as follows:

1. The study was conducted on 200 Intermediate students in Vijayawada, comprising 92 male students (46%) and 108 female students (54%).
2. With regard to study stream, 34 students (17%) belonged to the Arts stream, while 166 students (83%) belonged to the Science stream.
3. The overall mean academic stress score of the students was 66.23, with a standard deviation of 18.76, indicating variation in the level of academic stress experienced by the students.
4. Female students ($M = 67.21$) reported slightly higher academic stress than male students ($M = 65.08$).
5. The difference in academic stress between male and female students was not statistically significant ($t = -0.802, p = .424$). Hence, gender was not found to be a significant factor in academic stress in the present study.
6. Science students ($M = 68.42$) reported considerably higher academic stress than Arts students ($M = 55.55$).
7. The difference in academic stress between Arts and Science students was statistically significant ($t = -3.765, p < .001$).
8. The findings indicate that study stream was significantly associated with academic stress, with Science students experiencing greater academic stress than Arts students.
9. Among the different areas assessed through the Academic Stress Questionnaire, worry about future career or employment emerged as one of the prominent sources of stress among the Intermediate students.

10. Other important areas of stress included transport-related concerns, difficulty in keeping up with homework and working notes, excessive homework, and fear of failure in competitive examinations.
11. The findings suggest that academic demands and future career concerns are important areas requiring attention among Intermediate students in Vijayawada, particularly among Science students.

12. DISCUSSION

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the level of academic stress among Intermediate students in Vijayawada.

The overall mean academic stress score of the 200 Intermediate students was 66.23, with a standard deviation of 18.76. The findings indicate that the students experienced varying levels of academic stress. Career concerns, homework, academic workload and fear of failure in competitive examinations were among the important sources of stress.

The finding is supported by Pavani (2018), who reported a moderate level of stress among Intermediate students in Krishna district of Andhra Pradesh. Similarly, Paparao and Armuthavalli Devi (2021) identified academic stress as an important concern among Intermediate students in Guntur, Prakasam and Nellore districts. Thus, the present finding is consistent with earlier research showing that academic stress is an important issue among Intermediate students.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in academic stress between male and female Intermediate students.

The mean academic stress score of female students ($M = 67.21$) was slightly higher than that of male students ($M = 65.08$). However, the obtained t -value of -0.802 was not significant at the 0.05 level ($p = .424$). Therefore, H_02 was accepted, indicating that there was no significant difference in academic stress between male and female students.

This finding differs from Sumalatha (2014), who reported higher academic stress among female Intermediate students in Chittoor district. Similarly, Ravichandiran and Selvaraj (2024) and Gogoi (2025) reported higher academic stress among female students. Rashmi and Shafiq (2026) also found a significant effect of gender on academic stress. The difference between these studies and the present finding may be related to differences in geographical location, sample characteristics and educational environment.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference in academic stress between Arts and Science Intermediate students.

The mean academic stress score of Science students ($M = 68.42$) was substantially higher than that of Arts students ($M = 55.55$). The obtained t -value was -3.765 , with $p < .001$. Since the p -value was less than 0.05 , H_03 was rejected. Thus, there was a significant difference in academic stress between Arts and Science students, with Science students experiencing higher academic stress.

This finding is strongly supported by Sumalatha (2014), who found higher academic stress among Science students than Arts students in Chittoor district. Pavani (2018) also reported significantly higher stress among Science students in Krishna district. Similarly, Chaudhary, Salvi and Detha (2024) and Sharma and Saini (2025) reported differences in academic stress according to study stream. Rashmi and Shafiq (2026) also found a significant effect of academic stream on academic stress.

13. EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

1. **Career Guidance:** Regular career guidance programmes should be organised to reduce students' worries about future education and employment.
2. **Academic Counselling:** Colleges should provide academic counselling to help students manage examinations, assignments, homework and study schedules.
3. **Support for Science Students:** Special academic and counselling support should be provided to Science students, as they reported significantly higher academic stress.
4. **Stress Management:** Colleges should conduct programmes on stress management, relaxation techniques, time management and effective study habits.
5. **Examination Preparation:** Students should be trained in effective examination preparation and revision strategies to reduce examination-related stress.
6. **Manageable Workload:** Teachers should ensure that homework, assignments and working notes are reasonable and manageable.

7. **Parental Support:** Parents should provide encouragement and emotional support without creating excessive pressure or comparing their children with others.
8. **Counselling Services:** Qualified counsellors should be available in Intermediate colleges to identify and support students experiencing high academic stress.

14. SUGGESTIONS

Based on the findings, the following suggestions are made:

1. Junior colleges should conduct regular career-guidance programmes.
2. Counselling facilities should be made easily accessible to Intermediate students.
3. Teachers should monitor students who show signs of excessive academic pressure.
4. Competitive-examination preparation should be planned without unnecessarily increasing academic workload.
5. Parents should be sensitised to the academic and emotional needs of adolescents.
6. Students should be encouraged to follow realistic study schedules.
7. Colleges should provide adequate opportunities for recreation and physical activity.
8. Science students should receive additional academic and psychological support where required.
9. Career guidance should begin before students reach the final stage of Intermediate education.
10. Future research should examine academic stress together with academic achievement, academic resilience, anxiety, parental expectations and career anxiety.

15. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

1. The sample was limited to 200 Intermediate students.
2. The study was conducted in Vijayawada.
3. Only gender and study stream were considered as demographic variables.
4. The study was based on self-reported responses.
5. The study did not examine academic achievement or examination marks.
6. The Arts and Science groups were unequal in size, with 34 Arts and 166 Science students.
7. The study used a cross-sectional design and therefore cannot establish cause-and-effect relationships.

16. CONCLUSION

The present study was conducted to examine academic stress among Intermediate students in Vijayawada. The study included 200 students and considered gender and study stream as the selected demographic variables. The findings showed that the students experienced varying levels of academic stress, with career concerns, homework, academic workload and competitive examinations emerging as important sources of stress. The study found no significant difference in academic stress between male and female students. Although female students reported a slightly higher mean stress score than male students, the difference was not statistically significant. However, a significant difference was found between Arts and Science students. Science students reported considerably higher academic stress than Arts students. The findings indicate that the academic stream may have an important role in students' experience of academic stress. Therefore, Intermediate colleges should give particular attention to students facing higher academic demands, especially Science students. Career guidance, academic counselling, stress-management programmes, manageable workloads and supportive parental practices can help students deal with academic pressure effectively.

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