Academic Stress Among Higher Secondary School Students: A Critical Study

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Abstract: **Academic stress is a main source of stress for many students. The study examines the level of academic stress among higher secondary school students. Descriptive research design was adopted and stratified random sampling was chosen for study. A total sample of 110 students participated in this study were obtained from 10 higher secondary schools at Gorakhpur district. The data were collected though Academic Stress Scale. Data were analyzed Frequency, percentage, mean and SD. The study revealed that there exist high significant differences between the academic stress of male and female participants of higher secondary school students. It was also found that there was no significant difference between academic stress of government aided & self finance school students and rural & urban area school students.**

Keyword: Academic Stress, Higher Secondary School, Students.

INTRODUCTION

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).

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 (Arria, et al., 2009)

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).

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).

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. 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).

CAUSES OF ACADEMIC STRESS

The causes of academic stress can be classified mainly into seven categories i.e. the stress due to teachers, stress due to exams and test, stress due to peer, stress due to parental and social, stress due to time management and infrastructure, and stress due to self inflicted factors. These can arise from different school based sources of stress, such as school work, discipline and classroom management procedure, extra-curricular activities, and public performance.

ASPECTS OF STRESS

Anxiety

In May's book "The meaning of anxiety" (2015), anxiety is explained as the manner in which a person reacts or response to stress, accept and interpret. In this view, stress is seen as a journey to anxiety thus anxiety is an outcome of stress and it how an individual handles stress. A good handler of stress is likely to experience or no form of anxiety.

Burnout

Burnout, also refer to as soulless situation is where a person loses the eagerness and motivation in continuing to a particular kind of studies or activity as a result of both external and internal factors. The skills and expertise is still active but the desire and the wellness to perform is dead in the person as such activity or studies become huge responsibility without any joy.

It normally affects people whose studies are interaction with people like team leaders, managers, etc. Also, people whose studies are time band that is adhering to strict time schedule's also experienced burnout. In a situation where an activity or studies required much details and explanations burnout is likely to result in the people who are taking such activities.' The following are symptoms of burnout:

- Trouble sleeping due to worrying about studies
- Getting into too much conflict
- Bored with studies or activity

- Feeling frustrated with studies
- studying very hard and accomplishing little
- I don't like going to studies
- Social activities are draining

Distress

Distress is a moment of great pain sorrow, acute physical and mental suffering; Affliction, trouble (Dictionary.com 2016). It is as a result of an inability to handle or deal with a challenge or problem encountered in the performance of a specific activity or studies. Distress result in both emotional and physical pain. An example of emotional pain is sadness, resorting to drugs, violence, a low concentration at studies, and low participation in social activities. Most often than not Distress are caused by external factors.

Fear

Fear "is a chain reaction in the brain the start with a stressful stimulus and ends with the release of chemicals that cause a racing heart, fast breathing and energies mussels, among other things also known as the fight of light responses" (Layton 2016). Fear is a common aspect of human emotion that is sentenced in our nervous system. Fear is a result of instinct in human that responses to sensed danger or unsafe. It protects and alert us to an impending danger and that's help to prepare for this danger. It is a natural aspect of humans and in some cases it very good because it can be a warning or a signal that cautions us to be very careful. However, it is and can be extremely dangerous to the life of a person. Fear can be mild or intense and it can be short term or last longer.

Worry

Worry is as a result of thinking about an existing problem or yet to happen problem. It is constant thinking and meditating of challenge or fear. Worry looks into what is likely to happen in the future as a result of the present situation. It is a disturbing of one composer or peace of mind, worry causes distress to the mind and results in high blood pressure, headache, stomach disturbances and other physical discomforts.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present study aims at accomplishing the following objectives:

1. To find out the level of academic stress of higher secondary school students.
2. To find out the academic stress of higher secondary school students.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

According to Kai-wen (2010) Students at this level may sometimes experience incompatibility of their mental development with their physical changes or social environment and thus suffer from problems arising from inadequate adaptation. These problems may further cause psychological troubles and may even induce deviant behavior. Kai-wen in his study has also said about factors that influences stress among school going adolescents such as physiological or mental changes, school factors, relationship with opposite sex and family environment

Marwan Zaid Bataineh (2013) identified academic stress among undergraduate students: the case of education faculty at King Saud University. This study investigated the academic stressors experienced by the students at university. A total sample of 232 subjects participated in this study were obtained from faculty of education at KSU. Data were collected through self- administered questionnaire which was randomly distributed to the students during lecture time. Data obtained were analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation, and analysis of variance (ANOVA). The result showed that academic overloads, course awkward, inadequate time to study, workload every semester, exams awkward, low motivation, and high family expectations were drive moderately stress among students. It was also found that fear of failure is the major source of stress among undergraduate students. Moreover, the study found that there were positive correlation between religiosity sources and academic stress (r= .300**, p=.00). Lastly, the study found that there were no significant differences in academic stress among students with different, level of study and specializations.

Rajasekar (2013) Impact of academic stress among the management students of AMET University – An analysis. The study examined the impact of academic stress among the management students. Stress management encompasses techniques to equip a person with effective coping mechanisms for dealing with psychological stress. Students have different expectations, goals and values that they want to fulfill, which is only possible if they are integrated with that of the institution. The objective of the study is to find out the present level of stress, sources of stress and stress management techniques that would be useful for management students. The study takes into account various criteria like physical, psychological, individual, demographical and environmental factors of stress among the management students. The sample comprises of 100 students of AMET Business School, AMET University in Chennai. Data was collected through structured questionnaire by using convenient sampling method.

Tung and Chahal (2005) examined relationship between stress and adjustment and found no significant causal relationship between stress and the adjustment . However direction of the results implied that level of adjustment influences the number of stress full events and amount of stress experienced by them.

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METHODOLOGY

Descriptive survey method of research and stratified random sampling has been used. The higher secondary school students of Gorakhpur district constitute the population. The sample for the study consisted of 110 students from ten schools of Gorakhpur district affiliated to UP Board. This study was conduct on both boys and girls between age group of 12-21 years. Academic Stress Scale (ASS) was used for collecting the data. The obtained data were analyzed based on the objectives by using descriptive and inferential statistics. Frequency, Percentages Mean and SD was used to describe the socioeconomic status and academic stress, level of stress and stress management strategies of the sample.

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RESULTS
Table 1. Distribution of the Respondents According to the Age.

Age(yr)	Male N= 55	Female N=55	Total N=110
12-14	20 (36.36%)	12 (21.81%)	32 (29.09%)
15-17	22 (40%)	25 (45.45%)	47 (42.72%)
18-21	13 (23.63%)	18 (32.72%)	31 (28.18%)
	Mean =15.61 SD =2.29	Mean =16.32 SD =2.205	

This table showed that the majority (29.09%) of the respondents wear belonging to12-14 age group and majority (42.72%) respondents wear 15-17 age group and (28.18%) respondents wear belong to 18-21 age groups. The mean age value of male 15.61 with SD value 2.29 and female Mean 16.32 with SD 2.205.

Table 2. Distribution of Respondents According to Academic Stress

Academic stress	Male N=55	Female N=55	Total N=110
Yes	35 (63.63%)	25 (45.45%)	60 (54.54%)
No	20 (36.36%)	30 (54.54%)	50 (45.45%)
	Mean =7.95 SD =2.96	Mean =9.68 SD =1.41	

Table 2 Showed that majority of the 54.54% respondents was Academic stress and majority of the 45.45% respondents none of them academic stress. . The mean value of male 7.95 with S.D. value 2.96 and female Mea 9.68 with SD value is 1.41.
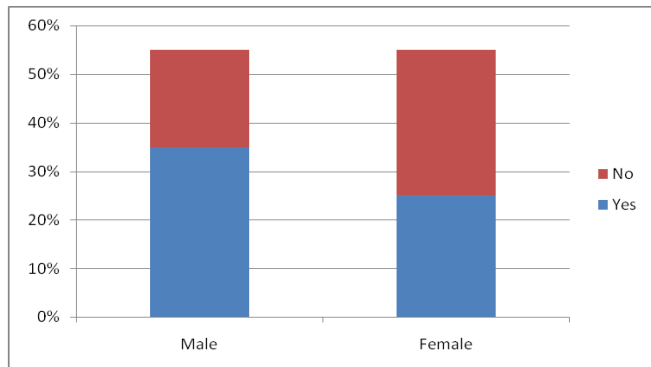

Fig. 1.Distribution of Respondents on According to Academic Stress

Table 3. Distribution of the Respondents According to the Level of Stress

Level of stress	Male N=55	Female N=55	Total N=110
Very low stress	10 (18.18%)	8 (14.54%)	18 (16.36%)
Low stress	16 (29.09%)	13 (23.63%)	29 (26.36%)
Moderate stress	25 (45.45%)	29 (52.72%)	54 (49.09%)
High stress	4 (7.27%)	5 (9.09%)	9 (8.18%)
	Mean=11.92 SD=9.37	Mean=12.80 SD=5.22	

Table 3 shows that majority of the 9 (8.18 %) respondents had a high level of stress, 54(49.09 %) had a moderate level of stress and the remaining 29 (26.36 %) had a low level of stress.
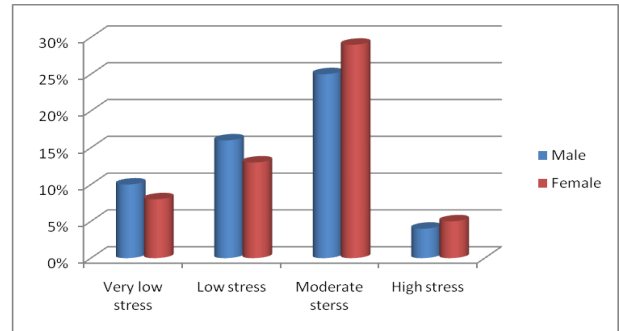

Fig:-2.Distribution of respondents on According to level of stress.

CONCLUSION

This study has established that adolescent school students especially in their higher secondary education face stress which was overlooked many a times by calling it a mere 'age factor'. Parent's expectation of their child to be a 'winning horse' further makes the situation worse. It is shocking to know that many students fear to talk to their teachers which show that sharing of problems with them is also low. It is also observed in Indian setting that very few schools appoint professional social workers. Professional workers not only take care of the psychological needs of the students but can prevent the adolescents from becoming deviant. Thus, this study emphasis that stressed feelings among adolescents should not be neglected, but has to be properly intervened, so as to avoid a larger destruction. 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. Whereas class workload was the main element of stress with regard to the academic factors. In the category of Personal factors, financial problems caused most stress to students. Stress can, however, be managed through the introduction of a stress management course and engaging in extracurricular activities.

IMPLICATION

Students are the wealth and future of a nation. It is clear from the findings that male participants have more academic stress than female participants. Their academic problem must be discussed by the teacher as well as parents. And they must be guided properly to choose a specific stream, not forced by parents. Parents should have expectations by their children according their capability. This study recommended that the teacher should arrange the necessary healthy environment to reduce the students' academic stress. The teachers' should focus on reducing the students' academic stress by providing mentors classes, time scheduling activities, changing teaching method, and providing extracurricular activities.

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