

Academic Stress in relation to mental health and Socio-Economic Status of Private Senior Secondary School students of Delhi - NCR

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ABSTRACT

The relationship between academic stress, mental health, and socio-economic status among senior secondary school students in Delhi-NCR. Recognizing the multifaceted nature of academic stress, the research aims to identify its determinants and its subsequent impact on students' mental health and socio-economic status. The investigation encompasses various educational theories such as behaviorist, cognitivist, and constructivist perspectives, acknowledging the importance of integrating these theories to create an inclusive learning environment. Conversely, there is a significant positive correlation between academic stress and socio-economic status, indicating that students with higher socio-economic status experience lower academic stress compared to their lower socio-economic status counterparts. The study also reveals gender-based differences in academic stress, with girls experiencing higher levels of academic stress than boys. Additionally, urban students exhibit higher academic stress compared to rural students, and students from the science stream report greater stress than those from the arts stream. Key findings indicate that there is a significant negative correlation between academic stress and mental health, suggesting that increased academic stress adversely affects students' mental well-being. Conversely, there is a significant positive correlation between academic stress and socio-economic status, indicating that students with higher socio-economic status experience lower academic stress compared to their lower socio-economic status counterparts. The study also reveals gender-based differences in academic stress, with girls experiencing higher levels of academic stress than boys. Additionally, urban students exhibit higher academic stress compared to rural students, and students from the science stream report greater stress than those from the arts stream. Key findings indicate that there is a significant negative correlation between academic stress and mental health, suggesting that increased academic stress adversely affects students' mental well-being.

Keywords: Academic Stress, Mental Health, Socio-Economic Status, Adolescent Stress, Environment,

Introduction:

Present age is the age of competition. Scientific and technological advancement all over the globe has made man very conscious and sensitive about his studies, vocation, life style, relations etc. This immense progress has given rise to certain problems. One of the major problems of today's world is "stress". Every person has a unique nature as regard to capabilities, attitude, personality characteristics and interests. The adolescents have a major impact of stress due to bloodshed competition in every field. The parents and teachers are eager to know the various factors, which enhance the stress among students. Education aims at

making children capable of becoming responsible, productive and useful member of society. Knowledge skills and attitude are built through learning experiences and opportunities created for learners in school. It is in the classroom that learners can analyze and evaluate their experiences, learn to doubt, to question to investigate and to think independently. Teaching and learning process in the class room situation is a process that includes many variables. These variables interact as learners work toward their goals and incorporate new knowledge, behaviors, and skills that add to their range of learning experiences. Education is conceived

to be a tripolar process, which involves interplay of the educator, the educant and the Social forces. The educator or the teacher tries to modify the personality of the educant i.e. the child in the light of the needs of the society. But it is possible only when the child is an active participant in the educational activities. Every child is born with certain natural and inherited endowments. These endowments are modified and sublimated for making the individual child a useful member of society. Unless he thoroughly understands the natural inclination of the child, his heredity, environment, desires, aptitude, habits, likes and dislikes he cannot succeed in imparting good education.

Academic stress

Scientific and technological progress all over the globe has made man highly sensitive, critical and creative. Associated with this growth is the emergence stress. The term 'stress' has become a part of our everyday vocabulary. The concept of stress may differ according to the individual's state of contexts and

interpretations. It is recognized that certain amount of stress is desirable, tolerable, productive but excessive stress may damage person's self and his life. In most general term, stress refers to 'a state of the organism resulting from some interaction with the environment, especially, when there exists imbalance between demands and resources'. Although ideas such as tension, anxiety and conflict have been a part of psychological thought for a long time, Hans Selye coined and developed the specific term 'stress' in 1936 (Ahmad, 2007). He views it as a response to demands made upon the organism. Thereafter, it was rapidly promoted into a research and theory concept. A survey of literature on stress reveals that stress may be any physiological or psychological state that results from a broad range of potentially unpleasant or dangerous events.

Raina (1983) listed some of the important behavioral, physiological and health effects which have been suggested to be linked to the experience of stress. These effects are shown in Table below:

Table 1.

Showing Behavioral, Psychological and Health Effects of Stress

1. Subject effects,	Anxiety, aggression, fatigue, depression, frustration, low self-esteem, threat and tension
2. Behavioral effects	Accident proneness, drug taking, emotional outbursts, excitability, impulsive behavior and restlessness
3. Cognitive effects	Inability to make decisions and concentrate, frequent forgetfulness and mental block.
4. Physiological effects	Increased blood and glucose levels, increased heart rate and B.P., sweating, a lump in the throat.
5. Health effects	Asthma, chest and back pain, coronary heart disease, diarrhea, frequent urinating, headaches, nightmares, insomnia, psychosomatic disorders, ulcer and weakness.
6. Organizational effects	Absenteeism, high accident rates, poor productivity

Student's life coincides with adolescence and stress can manifest in children as a reaction to the changes in life in addition to academic pressure. Children become more self aware and self conscious and their thinking becomes more critical and complex. At the same time, children often lack in academic motivation and performance, as their attention is divided among a lot many things, especially creating an identity for themselves. Erikson has kept adolescents in the period of identity verses role confusion. He said, "Equipped with the sense of trust, autonomy initiative and industry, adolescents begin to search for their own personal

identity". Erickson asserts that at this stage, the adolescents search by questioning and redefining his own socio-psychological identity established during earlier stages is definitely linked with (A) his sudden and rapid bodily changes, and (b) anxiety and pressures related to his need to make decisions about his future education and career. He further suggests that "Teachers and parents can play a very constructive role in helping adolescents through this identity versus confusion crisis.

Mental Health

Adolescents are generally perceived as a healthy age group, and yet an estimated 10-20% of them

experience a mental health problem. Depression is the main cause of worldwide disability among adolescents, and suicide is the second most common cause of death among young people. Poor mental health is strongly related to other health conditions and development outcomes in young people, including lower educational achievements, substance abuse, and violence. “Looking after one’s mind is as important as looking after one’s body”. As part of one’s overall health, mental and emotional health or well being is a necessary condition to enable one to manage one’s life successfully. Mental health is the emotional and spiritual resilience that allows one to enjoy life and to survive pain, suffering and disappointment. It is a positive sense of well being and an underlying belief in one’s own and others’ dignity and worth.

Criteria for good mental health

Mental health describes a level of psychological well-being, or an absence of a mental disorder. From the perspective of 'positive psychology' or 'holism', mental health may include an individual's ability to enjoy life, and create a balance between life activities and efforts to achieve psychological resilience. Mental health can also be defined as an expression of emotions, and as signifying a successful adaptation to a range of demands. It refers to our cognitive, and/or emotional wellbeing - it is all about how we think, feel and behave. Mental health, if somebody has it, can also mean an absence of a mental disorder. Approximately 25% of people in the UK have a mental health problem during their lives. The USA is said to have the highest incidence of people diagnosed with mental health problems in the developed world. Your mental health can affect your daily life, relationships and even your physical health. Mental health also includes a person's ability to enjoy life - to attain a balance between life activities and efforts to achieve psychological resilience.

According to Med lexicon’s medical dictionary, mental health is "emotional, behavioral, and social maturity or normality; the absence of a mental or behavioral disorder; a state of psychological well-being in which one has achieved a satisfactory integration of one's instinctual drives acceptable to both oneself and one's social milieu; an appropriate balance

of love, work and leisure pursuits”.

Significance of mental health

Evidence from the World Health Organization suggests that nearly half the world's populations are affected by mental illness with an impact on their self-esteem, relationships and ability to function in everyday life. An individual's emotional health can also impact physical health and poor mental health can lead to problems such as substance abuse. The importance of maintaining good mental health is crucial to living a long and healthy life. Good mental health can enhance one’s life, while poor mental health can prevent someone from living a normal life. According to Richards, Campania, & Muse-Burke (2010) “There is growing evidence that is showing emotional abilities are associated with prosocial behaviors such as stress management and physical health” (2010). It was also concluded in their research that people who lack emotional expression lead to misfit behaviors. These behaviors are a direct reflection of their mental health. Self-destructive acts may take place to suppress emotions.

Emotional Mental Health issues across the World

Emotional mental disorders are a leading cause of disabilities worldwide. Investigating the degree and severity of untreated emotional mental disorders throughout the world is a top priority of the World Mental Health (WMH) survey initiative, which was created in 1998 by the World Health Organization (WHO). “Neuropsychiatric disorders are the leading causes of disability worldwide, accounting for 37% of all healthy life years lost through disease. These disorders are most destructive to low and middle-income countries due to their inability to provide their citizens with proper aid. Despite modern treatment and rehabilitation for emotional mental health disorders, “even economically advantaged societies have competing priorities and budgetary constraints”. The World Mental Health survey initiative has suggested a plan for countries to redesign their mental health care systems to best allocate resources. “A first step is documentation of services being used and the extent and nature of unmet needs for treatment. A second step could be to do a cross-national comparison of service use and unmet needs in

countries with different mental health care systems. Such comparisons can help to uncover optimum financing, national policies, and delivery systems for mental health care.” Knowledge of how to provide effective emotional mental health care has become imperative worldwide. Unfortunately, most countries have insufficient data to guide decisions, absent or competing visions for resources, and near constant pressures to cut insurance and entitlements.

Treatments and strategies for mental health problems

There are various ways people with mental health problems might receive treatment. It is important to know that what works for one person may not work for another; this is especially the case with mental health. Some strategies or treatment are more successful when combined with others. The patient himself/herself with a chronic (long-term) mental disorder may draw on different options at different stages in his/her life. The majority of experts say that the well informed patient is probably the best judge of what treatment suits him/her better. It is crucial that healthcare professionals be aware of this.

Objectives Of The Review

Review of related literature allows the researcher to acquaint himself with the current knowledge in the field or area in which he is going to conduct his research. Its serves the following specific

To enable the researcher to define the limits of his field – Review helps researcher to delimit and define his problem. To use an analogy given by Ary etal (1972), a researcher might say: The work of A, B and C has discovered this much about my question, the investigations of D have added this much to our knowledge. I purpose to go beyond D’s work in the following manner.

The knowledge of related literature makes the researcher up-to-date on the work which others have done. It enables him to state the objective clearly and concisely.

To avoid unfruitful and useless problem areas – The researcher can select those areas in which findings are very likely to result and his endeavors would be likely to add to the knowledge in a meaningful way.

To avoid unintentional duplication of well – established findings- It is no use to replicate the study

when stability and validity have been clearly established. Review helps to achieve this purpose.

To give an understanding to the methodology- Review refers to the way the study is to be conducted. It helps the researcher to know about the research, to know about the tools and instruments which proved to be useful and promising in the previous studies. The related literature provides insight into statistical methods through which validity of results is to be established.

To know previous recommendations- The final and important specific reason for reviewing the related literature is to know about the recommendations of previous researchers for further research which they have listed in their studies. Below is given a review of reasonable number of studies related directly or indirectly to the problem undertaken by the investigator. Education aims at making children capable of becoming responsible, productive and useful member of society. Knowledge skills and attitude are built through learning experiences and opportunities created for learners in school. It is in the classroom that learners can analyze and evaluate their experiences, learn to doubt, to question to investigate and to think independently. Teaching and learning process in the class room situation is a process that includes many variables. These variables interact as learners work toward their goals and incorporate new knowledge, behaviors, and skills that add to their range of learning experiences.

Findings Related to Academic Stress Statistics of Senior Secondary School Students Level of Academic Stress Statistics of Senior Secondary School Students Out of 100 boys of senior secondary schools 30 boys falling under high level of academic stress, 38 boys falling under average level of academic stress and 25 boys falling under low level of academic stress. Out of 100 girls of senior secondary schools 32 girls boys falling under high level of academic stress, 36 girls falling under average level of academic stress and 32 girls falling under low level of academic stress. This shows that numbers of boys and girls falling under average level of academic stress are higher than that of other levels of academic stress.

Hypotheses wise findings are as follows

Correlation between Academic Stress and

Mental Health of Senior Secondary School Students: The coefficient of correlation between academic stress and mental health of secondary school students is -0.48. The obtained 'r' value is greater than that of tabulated values at 0.05 and Correlation between Academic Stress and Socio-Economic Status of Senior Secondary School Students of Science Stream: The coefficient of correlation between academic stress and socio-economic status of senior secondary school students of science stream is 0.89. The obtained 'r' value is greater than that of tabulated values at 0.05 and 0.01 level of significance. So it is concluded that there is significant correlation between the academic stress and socio-economic status of Senior Secondary School students of science stream.

The drawn the following conclusions on the basis of interpretation of the results which are as follows:

- On the basis of Level of Socio-economic Status (SES) Statistics of Senior Secondary School Students the number of boys and girls falling under average level of SES are higher than that of other levels of SES. This shows that most of the boys and girls have average level of SES.

- On the basis of level of academic stress of Senior Secondary School Students the numbers of boys and girls falling under average level of academic stress are higher than that of other levels of academic stress. This shows that most of the students have average academic stress. The academic stress of boys is reported to be higher than that of girls.

- On the Basis of Levels of Mental Health (Mh) Statistics of Boys and girls of Senior Secondary Schools the students falling under average level of mental health are higher than that of other levels. Under different dimensions of mental health students have different levels towards perception of reality, positive self evaluation, integration of personality, Autonomy, Group oriented attitudes, Environmental Competence.

- There is significant negative correlation between the academic stress and mental health of senior secondary school students. So it is concluded that more academic stress affects the mental health of senior secondary school students.

- It is found that academic stress of rural students is less than that of urban students so it is concluded that mental health of rural students is better

than that of urban students because pressure of studies in urban schools is greater than that of rural schools.

- Academic Stress of science stream students at senior secondary level is much greater than that of Arts stream students. It is concluded that Science students take more tension as compare to arts students.

- There is significant positive correlation between the academic stress and socio-economic status of senior secondary school students. This shows that students with high socio economic status feel low academic stress as compare to students with poor socioeconomic status.

Educational Implications

- There are a lot people with mental health problems may do to improve their mental health. Alterations in lifestyle, which may include a better diet, lower alcohol and illegal drug consumption, exercise and getting enough sleep can make enormous differences to a mental health patient's mental health.

- Psychotherapies that have been found to be effective in treating many mental disorders include family focused therapy, psycho-education, cognitive therapy, interpersonal therapy, and social rhythm therapy.

- Medications may play an important role in the treatment of a mental illness, particularly when the symptoms are severe or do not adequately respond to psychotherapy.

Over the past century, various perspectives on learning have emerged, among them — behaviorist (response to external stimuli); cognitivist (learning as a mental operation); and constructivist (knowledge as a constructed element resulting from the learning process). Rather than considering these theories separately, it is best to think of them together as a range of possibilities that can be integrated into the learning experience. During the integration process, it is also important to consider a number of other factors — cognitive style, learning style, the multiple natures of our intelligences, and learning as it relates to those who have special needs and are from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Academic achievement expectations have created so much fear among the students that they are not able to utilize their basic potential. They are to only concentrate on their academic performance. Academic stress is not only due to the higher

expectations of the teachers, society and parents but also because of the level of mental health and socio-economic status of the family of the student. Every child is not able to get first division as the level of mental health is not the same in every child. There is also an important factor as the socio-economic status of the family of the student. It is a general tendency between the present generation's middle and low income group student that they want to lift up the standard of living of their family. To lift this level up they have to get good jobs and thus they are more career conscious than the rich income group students. So the level of academic stress is more on them than the other students. Stress is a word that everyone wants to avoid but cannot.

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Conclusion:

The study highlights the critical role of mental health in students' academic performance and overall well-being. It emphasizes the need for comprehensive mental health programs in schools to address the psychological distress experienced by students. Recommendations include integrating mental health services into the school curriculum, promoting a balanced lifestyle, and creating a supportive educational environment. Key findings indicate that there is a significant negative correlation between academic stress and mental health, suggesting that increased academic stress adversely affects students' mental well-being. The study provides valuable insights into the complex interplay between academic stress, mental health, and socio-economic status among senior secondary school students.

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