



Academic Stress and Adjustment Levels of Secondary Students

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Abstract

An optimum stress is like honey, which acts as medicine to produce energy and flavor to the endeavour of human physiology and psychic functioning and enhances intellectual efficiency. It is a boon for realization and achievement of better things in life. But the intake of too much of honey makes a man dull, lazy and thirsty. Similarly, stress, at an optimum level helps an individual to be successful and adds fragrance to the life by stimulating the capabilities.

It is observed that stress among the school children is a universal phenomenon and is the prime concern for all the people. More and more children suffer from stress now-a-days. Stress may come from self, home or school for a child. The child carries it from home to school or from school to home. In both the cases the self is affected. Stress hinders the child's performance at school and spoils the attitude to work or to study.

Key words : Academic Stress, Adjustment level

Introduction

From an early age a sense of achievement is a source of good motivation and self-esteem and failure is a source of anger and frustration when the learner faces failure, not only feels disturbed but also feels ridiculed by others and is more prone to stress.

In the hustle and bustle of the modern world, stress is unavoidable. Every one like adults, teens and even kids-experience it at times and in different ways. Just enough stress can keep you on your toes, ready to rise to a challenge. But too much stress can have debilitating effects on

our health, contributing to and agitating many problems including heart diseases, high blood pressure, stroke and depression and sleep disorders. Now researchers have found a clear connection between students stress and academic success.

Academic Stress

Academic stress is a cause for great concern among adolescents. Adolescents face a life full of stress in the past mechanized and competitive world of today. Peace and stress-free life of present students appears to be a mirage. The present child is caught up in a dynamic technological whirlpool and seems to be



precariously poised on the brink of disaster. In every school, there is lot of academic pressure. Adolescents recognize that they are about to inherit all of society's threatening problems-war, pollution, global warming, uncertain economy and uncertain job opportunities. Stress is an important aspect affecting academic achievement besides writing term papers, test anxiety, poor study skills, excessive academic load and poor classroom environment. They cause academic stress, which in turn forms part of general stress among adolescents.

Result-oriented world of today puts too much stress on students to achieve better for which they have to work very hard. This is possible only if they are both physically and mentally healthy. In order to lead a happy and prosperous life with utmost harmony in the society, academic pressures mount during high school, particularly in the last two years. Many parents know that academic struggle to avoid failing an important course can be quite stressful. Even the academically capable students feel the greatest pressure, as they find themselves competing for scores (Needleman, 2004).

Definitions of Stress

According to Webster's new world dictionary (1973) "Stress is the mental or physical tension caused by some urgency or pressure".

According to Selye (1974) "Stress is a generalized response of body to

demands placed on it, whether they are pleasant or unpleasant".

According to Medeiros (1983) "Stress is a curious phenomenon".

According to Matthews et.al., (1986) "Stress may be an internal state which can be caused by physical demands on the body such as disease, exercise, extremes of temperature, professional hazards and so on by environmental and social situations, which are evaluated as potentially harmful and uncontrollable".

According to oxford Dictionary "Stress is a state of affair involving demand on physical or mental energy".

Sources of Stress

One of the greatest contributors to stress among children is to get ready, to go from one place to another, to do well in school and to become an all-round achiever. Stress also occurs in response to pressures such as homework, tests, over-load of non-school activities, conflict with friends and family and the physical and emotional changes that come with growing up. Stress is created among students when there is parental pressure to perform better sometimes beyond their capacity and to stand out among other children. When they cannot fulfill these expectations or during the process of achieving it, children may suffer from frustration, physical stress, aggression, undesirable complexes and depression. School system are also to be blamed, as it crams



students with tremendous amount of school work, which students are expected to compete by sacrificing their leisure hours or vocation. Unable to find enough time for them, students lose interest in studies particularly during adolescence.

Academic achievement, academic pressure and school climate influence academic stress. Need for academic achievement was a predictor for institutional stress and academic stress (Bisht,1980).

In a school situation, there is a lot of academic pressure prevailing among secondary level students, which causes or enhances stress among students. Stress is an important factor affecting academic achievement. The present system of education is not giving much emphasis to the capacity of the student but on achieving more and more marks. For release of stress and improvement of result at the secondary level the appropriate and suitable strategies or methods are to be deployed by the teachers when teaching school students. This is possible only if they are physically and mentally healthy. Where the stress releases, there the anxiety levels may decrease and enhances the study skills among students.

Adjustment level

Coping style or adjustment level is an action in which the individual interacts with the situation or a person for the purpose of accomplishing something. The term 'adjustment' has been used to denote

the way of dealing with stress. In an effort to master the conditions of harm, threat or challenge when a routine or automatic response is not readily available. There are many ways by which individuals adjust with stress and each appears to be unique in each individual.

Relationship between adjustment and academic stress

There are many ways by which students adjust with academic stress. In the ultimate analysis the typical manner in which a particular individual copes with the academic stress may be unique to him. It is perhaps unlikely that several students put under similar academic stress situations may always react in identical ways. Nevertheless, there have been a large number of attempts at classifying the ways or methods by which students adjust with academic stress. These methods are referred to as adjustment levels.

The term adjustment level broadly refers to effort to manage environmental and internal demands and conflicts among demands. (Lazarus 1996, 81). The term adjustment level has been used interchangeably with concepts such as mastery, defence and adaption. A working definition proposed by Pearlin and Schooler (1978) refers to it as any response to external life strains that serves to prevent, avoid and control external distress.

Reviews of Related Literature



Bisht Abha (1980) studied the effect of school climate and need for high achievement on the academic stress of students.

Chanda and Chandra (1985) adolescent boys are better adjusted than adolescent girls.

Fahs,(1986) examined inner-city high school students coping processes in relation to stressful academic and social events in the school environment.

Rajendra and Kaliappan (1990) studied the efficacy of the behavioural programmer in managing the academic stress and improving the academic performance. Kohn and Frager (1986) excessive homework, term papers, examinations and studying for examinations are the most significant factors that cause academic stress.

Sheridan and Smith (1987) studied stress and academic achievement in high school students.

Verma Manika (2004) studied "A Study of stress assessment and its behavior". The results of the study indicate that no significant difference was observed between different components of stress among male and female students.

Statement of the Problem

The investigator has selected the problem "A Study of Academic Stress and Adjustment Levels of Secondary Students of Chittoor District".

Objectives of the Study

To study the academic stress and adjustment of secondary school students with reference to Sex and Medium

Hypotheses of the Study

1. There is no significant difference between male and female students regarding their academic stress.
2. There is no significant difference between male and female students regarding their adjustment level.
3. There is no significant difference between Telugu and English Medium students regarding their academic stress.
4. There is no significant difference between Telugu and English medium students regarding their adjustment level.

Sample of the Study

The sample selected for this investigation consisted of a total 480 students studying from 8th class, 9th class and 10th class selected by following stratified random sampling technique.

Variables

Independent Variables

Sex, Class, Medium, Subject group birth order, percentage of marks, father and mother's education, Father and Mother's Occupation, Annual income of the Family, Total no. of Persons in the family, Religion, Caste, Type of Family, Locality.



Dependent Variables

1. Students' Academic Stress (SAS)
2. Adjustment level to stress generating situations (AL)

Tools used

Academic Stress Scale – A 70 item scale has been developed to identify the sources of academic stress among students. This scale was to study the academic stress. this has been developed by the investigator for the present study.

Adjustment Level Scale – The scale is developed with the statements pertaining to each of the adjustment strategies and then the subjects were asked to indicate which strategy they would use. With this idea a pool of statements has been collected for each strategy and the list has been scrutinized by the investigator, the research supervisor and ten other psychologists regarding their validity for inclusion in the scale in a meaningful manner.

Pilot Study

Pilot study was conducted on a sample of 370 high school students for considering the suitability of the items of stress and adjustment level scales. By giving the weightages total scores of all the subjects on the

Interpretation of Data

Hypothesis-1

Significance of difference between Academic Stress mean of male and female students

academic stress and adjustment level scale were calculated and arranged in ascending order. Then based on the total scores of the scales, 100 from high group and 100 from low group were separated for calculating the discriminative power of each item in both the scales.

Collection of Data

The researcher personally went to the schools to instruct the students towards responding to the tools. They were given sufficient time to complete their marking for all items of the tools. After completion, the investigator has collected the data for further analysis purpose.

Since the investigator considered the survey method is more appropriate to adopt in this study. In all respects the same used in this study.

Statistical Techniques used for the study

In order to test the hypotheses formulated for the study the following statistical techniques were employed.

1. Mean and Standard Deviation
2. T-test and F-ratio
3. Pearson's Product moment correlation

Table-1



S.No.	Sex	Sample Size	Mean	SD	t-value
1	Male	240	89.48	19.382	7.459**
2	Female	240	77.32	16.201	

Note: ** Significant at 0.01 level

In the above table the mean value on stress of male students were found as 89.48 and 77.32 respectively. From the observation of above mean values it can be understood that male students are having more stress than female students comparatively. The obtained 't' value 7.459 is significant

at 0.01 level. Hence the formulated hypothesis "There is no significant difference between male and female students regarding their stress" is rejected. This shows that there is significant difference between male and female students in their stress at 0.01 level of confidence.

Hypothesis-2

Significance of the difference between Adjustment Level means of male and female students

Table-2

S.No.	Sex	Sample Size	Mean	SD	t-value
1	Male	240	58.83	11.831	4.745**
2	Female	240	53.89	10.991	

Note: ** Significant at 0.01 level

In the above table the mean value on adjustment level of male students were found as 58.83 and 53.89 respectively. From the observation of above mean values it can be understood that male students adjustment are higher than female students. The obtained 't' value 4.745 is significant at 0.01 level.

Hence the formulated hypothesis "There is no significant difference between male and female students regarding their adjustment level" is rejected. This shows that there is significant difference between male and female students in their adjustment level at 0.01 level of confidence.

Hypothesis-3

Significance of the difference between academic stress means between Telugu and English Medium of Instruction



Table-3

S.No.	Medium of Instruction	Sample Size	Mean	SD	t-value
1	Telugu	240	79.55	19.240	4.569**
2	English	240	87.25	17.671	

Note: ** Significant at 0.01 level

In the above table the mean value on stress of Telugu and English medium students were found 79.55 and 87.25 respectively. From the observation of above mean values it can be understood that English medium students are having more stress than Telugu Medium students comparatively. The obtained 't' value

4.569 is significant at 0.01 level. Hence the formulated hypothesis "There is no significant difference between Telugu and English Medium students regarding their stress" is rejected. This shows that there is significant difference between Telugu and English medium students in their stress at 0.01 level of confidence.

Hypothesis-4

Significance of the difference between adjustment level of students between Telugu and English Medium students

Table-4

S.No.	Medium of Instruction	Sample Size	Mean	SD	t-value
1	Telugu	240	54.49	11.968	3.558**
2	English	240	58.23	11.080	

Note: ** Significant at 0.01 level

In the above table the mean value on adjustment level of Telugu and English medium students were found 54.49 and 58.23 respectively. From the observation of above mean values it can be understood that English medium students are more than Telugu Medium students in adjustment. The obtained 't' value 3.558 is significant at 0.01 level.

Hence the formulated hypothesis "There is no significant difference between Telugu and English Medium students regarding their adjustment level" is rejected. This shows that there is significant difference between Telugu and English medium students in their adjustment level at 0.01 level of confidence.



Findings of the Study

1. From the Table-1 above analysis it is found that 89.48 male means of students have more stress when compared to 77.32 female mean of students. The difference between these two means was tested and found that there is no significant difference.
 2. From the Table-2 above analysis it is found that 58.83 male means of students are more adjusted when compared to 53.89 female mean students.
 3. From the Table-3 above analysis it was found that the mean of academic stress score of English medium students was 87.25 and Telugu medium students was 79.55. The difference between these two means was tested and found that there is a significant difference between English and Telugu medium students.
 4. From the Table-4 above analysis it was found that the mean adjustment level score of Telugu medium was 54.49 and English medium was 58.23. The difference between their two means was tested and found that there is a significant difference in English medium students are more adjusted when compared to Telugu medium students.
- will be hampered which affects their success.
2. Since the teacher is a guide, it is necessary to estimate the academic stress and adjustment level of students for proper guidance.
 3. Even to respond to the new schemes for students, the students should be free from stress and adjust to the new environment.
 4. Guidance and counseling services in schools may be started to reduce stress.
 5. Stress relaxation programmes should be introduced like speeches, drill, meditation, storytelling, moral instructions etc.
 6. The syllabus and associated activities must be related to their age and maturity level.

Educational Implications

1. When the student is having academic stress, she or he cannot adjust well to the situation. As a consequence their achievement

Suggestions for further research

1. A study on the similar ground may be extend to other districts, regions and states.
2. Studies on similar grounds may be carried out to study the level of academic stress and adjustment levels of students of higher levels and professional courses.
3. Similar studies may be conducted with sum other variables to estimate the influence of sex, class of study, birth order, marks, father's education, mother's education, employment status of mother and father, income, family



- size and religion on academic stress.
4. Research may be taken up to investigation the impact of different relaxation techniques like yoga, meditation, sports, games, leisure time activities, teacher involvement, attitude of teachers, agitations etc.
 5. Studies in this area can be conducted by including different psychological characteristics like intelligence, attitudes, interests, aptitude, achievement levels etc.

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