



## Academic Stress of College Students in Relation to their Mental Health

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**Abstract :** The students today are facing with new challenges in education calling for greater effort from students. In addition there are heavy demands made by the society on students to perform various roles, many of which are undefined, inconsistent and unachievable in the present socio-cultural, economic and bureaucratic contexts of our society, causing heavy stress on students mainly college students. Unfortunately stress is a common part of life as we begin the new millennium, something few of us can avoid altogether. Partly for this reason and partly for both physical health and psychological wellbeing, stress has become an important topic of research in psychology. Academic stress plays a major role in determining the mental health of students. This study was conducted to explore the academic stress and its relationship with mental health among college students. 100 Jr. college students from Government and Private junior Colleges in and around Vijayawada city, Andhra Pradesh were selected through stratified random sampling and the data was collected with Educational Stress Scale for Adolescents and Positive Mental Health Scale. The results revealed that students from private school experienced higher academic stress than that of government college students, and private college students have higher mental health status than their counterpart. It was also found that academic stress had a significant relationship with the mental health of college students. The implications of this are presented in this article.

**Keywords:** Academic Stress, Mental health, College student

### 1. INTRODUCTION

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 demands, 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. These demands may tax or exceed available resources of the students. As a consequence, they can

be under stress, since the demand is related to achievement of an academic goal. So, academic related to the achievement of an academic goal. Bisht (1989) has defined academic stress as a demand related to academics that tax or exceed the available resources (internal or external) as cognitively appeared by the student involved. According to her, academic stress reflects perception of individual's academic frustration, academic conflict, academic pressure and academic anxiety. She has given the definition of four components of academic stress as follows: Academic Frustration:-



Academic frustration is a state caused by harm of some academic goals. Academic Conflict:- Academic Conflict is the result of two or more [incompatible] but in compatible response tendencies to academic goals. Academic Pressure:- When the student is under heavy demands of time and energy to meet academic goals. And Academic Anxiety:- Apprehension of harm to some academic goals. Academic Stress is an important factor accounting for variation in academic achievement. It also contributes to major mental health hazards, problems both physical and mental stress related diseases. Stress makes a significant contribution to the prediction of subsequent school performance and act as a negative predictor of academic performance in school children (Ender et al. 1994) shows the components of Academic Stress Akbar Hussain. Ashutosh Kumar and Abid Hussain in their finding that magnitude of academic stress among high school students was found to be high particularly among the public school students. Academic stress and overall adjustment of students were inversely related to each other for both public school as well as private school students. Private school students by and large stiffer from higher level of academic stress than their government school counterparts.

High school students cite day to day stresses of school (e.g. tests, grades, home work, academic and achievement expectations) among their greatest stressors (Crystal et al., 1994; de Anda et al. 2000; Ohman and Jarvis, 2000) Types of school-related stresses include, interactions with teachers and balancing one's leisure time with school (True et al 2007) earlier inventories of school-related stressor indicated nine types,

including inadequate instructional methods, teacher students relationships, heavy academic workload, poor physical classroom environments and disorganization surrounding academic assignments and schedules (Burnett & Fanshawe, 1997) one specific academic stressor involves standardized testing, which is increasingly common in American schools (McNamara 2000) This is particularly true for 1B students who are required to complete end-of-course exams to obtain 1B diploma. Many times these students also take Advanced Placement (AP) exams because some academic institutions award university-level credit for only the higher level (intensive, 2 year) 1B course examinations (Matthes, 2004).

K. Dubat & others(2007) stated that the adolescents experienced stress in the categories of family stress, ego threat, bereavement, personal set back, health and other issues. Dr. V. Srikanth Reddy & others (2005) highlighted that adolescent girls experienced less stress when compared to adolescent boys. Neetha George & Dr. Anitha Ravindran (2005) concluded that, the need of time accuracy and time perception effective coping styles are helpful to low achievers to get rid of from stress. K. Saraladevi & Niranjan Devaraj (2003) indicated that examination stress has negative impact on immune system. Dr. C.B.Asha (2003) concluded that, cognitive excellence is a resource for adapting to stressful conditions and fostering positive mental health.

Stress exists from the change in an individual's thinking and their lifestyle nowadays. Now, individuals have changed in their perceptions and the way they interpret this life. Students in their teens are the ones who are going through



the transitional phase, which is an intermediate of childhood and adulthood. Stress is believed to be caused by the various problems that exist such as problems at school, financial problems, family problems and problems in their surroundings. Teenagers also experience stress because they are sometimes trapped between making decisions which is to follow rules and orders or to be free and discover the world like they should. Teenagers in the previous days were trained for things that were suitable with their age so that they can use it to manage their lives. But now teenagers have to follow their parents' desires which are preparing them to compete in the social system where the society is scrambling towards modernization so that they are not left behind. If it is not managed well, stress can ignite psychological disturbances among them when they are grown up. These disturbances will cause stress to the teenagers in the future if they are not overcome now. Since past few years mental health disorders among children and adolescents have received a great significant attention in the field of research. However very less number of researchers are conducted in India which highlight the aspects of mental health and mental disorders among adolescents.

## 2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The present study is titled as "Academic stress of college students in relation to their mental health" The researcher has planned to know effect of stress on the mental health of the college students.

## 3. OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS

**Mental Health**

Mental health implies the capacity of an individual to form harmonious relations with others and to participate constructively to changes in his social and physical environment.

### Academic stress:

Academic stress involves mental distress regarding anticipated academic challenges or failure or even an awareness of the possibility of academic failure during the school years.

### College students:

The students studying the classes 11th and 12th are considered as College students

## 4. OBJECTIVES

1. To find out the relationship between academic stress and mental health among college students
2. To compare the academic stress of college students with respect to their college management.
3. To compare the mental health of college students with respect to their college management.

## 5. HYPOTHESES

1. There is a significant relationship between academic stress and mental health among college students
2. Students from government and private colleges differ significantly in their academic stress
3. Students from government and private colleges significantly differ in their mental health

## 6. METHODOLOGY

**Method:** Survey method



**Sample:** The population of this study consisted of government and private junior college science group students in and around Vijayawada city. 100 college students were selected through stratified random sampling.

**Tool:** Educational Stress Scale for Adolescents and Positive Mental Health Scale

**Statistical Method:** For statistical analysis and hypothesis testing mean and t-test was applied.

## 7. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Table 1: Relationship between Academic Stress and Mental Health of college Students**

Dimensions of Academic Stress/Mental Health	Pressure from Study	Work load	Worry about Grades	Self-Expectation	Despondency	Total
General Coping	0.214*	0.172*	0.11	0.065	-0.154*	0.176*
Emotional Support	0.074	0.052	0.190*	-0.022	-0.175*	0.066
Spirituality	0.234*	0.06	0.114	0.08	-0.029	0.196*
Interpersonal Skills	0.264*	0.143	0.226*	-0.068	-0.115	0.203*
Personal Growth and Autonomy	0.261*	0.202*	0.262*	-0.034	0.013	0.294*
Global Affect	0.12	0.172*	0.018	0.001	-0.076	0.098
Total	0.261*	0.166*	0.214*	-0.004	-0.113	0.226*

\*Significant at 0.05 level

Table 1 revealed the relationship between academic stress and mental health among college students. From the table, it is observed that the academic stress and mental health are significantly correlated with each other. Hence, the hypothesis is accepted. It is observed from the table that general coping is negatively correlated with despondency which is clearly indicative that college students are frustrated from their academic. This may be due to the pressure from parents

as well as college to get higher grades. Emotional support and despondency are negatively correlated which is evident that college students did not get proper emotional support from their family and college management. It was found that academic stress and mental health of college students positively correlated each other. The result is indicative that college students will be mentally healthy when they are more productive in their academic activities.



**Table 2: Academic Stress among Government and Private College Students**

Dimensions of Academic Stress	Private (N=50)		Government (N=50)		't' value
	M1	SD1	M2	SD2	
Pressure from study	12.27	3.25	11.09	2.67	2.60*
Work load	9.56	2.58	8.38	2.17	3.19*
Worry about grades	10.56	3.06	9.89	2.34	1.62 NS
Self-Expectation	9.17	2.23	9.69	2.46	1.75 NS
Despondency	8.62	2.34	8.51	2.25	0.61 NS
Academic Stress Total	50.59	7.21	48.06	5.93	2.60*

\* Significant at 0.05 level, Not Significant -NS

From table 2 it is found from the table that college students from government and private colleges differ significantly in pressure from study, workload and overall academic stress. Generally in private colleges, students are provided with a lot of home works and pressurized

to get higher marks. Also, parents of these children invested huge money on their academics and expect their children to get very high marks. So, these children experience pressure from college as well as parents and obviously they could experience higher academic stress.

**Table 3: Mental Health of Students from Government and Private colleges**

Dimensions of Mental Health	Private (N=50)		Government (N=50)		't' value
	M1	SD1	M2	SD2	
General Coping	36.55	5.18	35.58	7.48	1.11NS
Emotional support	35.28	7.39	36.16	11.11	0.76 NS
Spirituality	31.26	5.98	29.41	9.53	1.65 NS
Interpersonal skills	42.63	6.97	37.12	11.62	4.03 *
Personal Growth and Autonomy	42.76	7.89	37.33	9.72	4.18*
Global Affect	20.53	5.6	18.48	5.33	2.35*
Mental Health Total	209.41	22.48	194.38	47.36	2.77*

\* Significant at 0.05 level, Not Significant

Table 3 revealed the differences in mental health of students from government and private colleges. It is noted that students differ significantly in the dimensions of

interpersonal skills, personal growth & autonomy, global affect as well as in the overall mental health. It is witnessed from the practices that most of the



private colleges focus on training activities to promote academic success, motivation and other social skills. Also, many students from private colleges are from upper middle class and also their parents educated. On the other hand, majority of students in government colleges are from poor socio economic background and illiterate family, and many of them are first generation learners. These students struggle a lot to fulfill their basic academic activities and these factors would have affected their mental health adversely.

## 8. CONCLUSION

The results revealed that college students from private college experienced higher academic stress than that of government college students, and private college students have higher mental health status than their counterpart. It was also found that academic stress had a significant relationship with the mental health of college students.

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