A study on Academic Stress of Higher Secondary students

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Abstract
Academic stress is a significant concern among higher secondary students due to the increasing academic demands and expectations from parents and society. This study explores the factors contributing to academic stress, including gender, locality, type of school, place of stay, medium of instruction, parental education, and parental occupation. Using a normative survey method, data were collected from 753 students in Villupuram and Cuddalore districts of Tamil Nadu. The findings indicate that female students, rural students, and those with parents engaged in agriculture exhibit higher levels of academic stress. However, no significant differences were observed based on urban versus rural locality, government versus private institutions, or day scholars versus hostel residents. The study underscores the importance of stress management programs, counseling services, and mindfulness practices in educational institutions to mitigate the adverse effects of academic stress. Future research should address the socio-economic, cultural, and psychological dimensions of stress to develop holistic interventions.

Keywords: Academic Stress, Higher Secondary students

Introduction

Academic stress is a prevalent issue among students, particularly those in higher secondary education. As students transition to a more rigorous academic environment, they often face significant pressure to excel in their studies, meet parental expectations, and secure admission to prestigious institutions. This stress is further exacerbated by the competitive nature of examinations and the increasing demand for multitasking between academic and extracurricular activities. Academic stress not only affects students' academic performance but also their mental and physical well-being. According to Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) transactional model of stress, academic stress arises from an imbalance between students' perceived demands and their ability to cope. Understanding the causes and implications of academic stress is crucial for educators, parents, and policymakers to create supportive environments that promote students' holistic development.

This study seeks to explore the factors contributing to academic stress among higher secondary students, its impact on their overall well-being, and potential strategies to alleviate stress. By reviewing existing literature and analyzing empirical data, this research aims to provide insights into effective interventions to manage academic stress and enhance students' academic and personal outcomes.

Literature Review

Academic stress has been widely studied in the field of educational psychology. Various researchers have identified key factors contributing to academic stress, including examination pressure, workload, parental expectations, and peer competition. For instance, Deb, Strodl, and Sun (2015) found that examination-related anxiety was one of the most significant stressors for Indian higher secondary students. Similarly, a study by Verma and Gupta (2017) highlighted the role of parental pressure in shaping students' stress levels, emphasizing the need for parents to adopt a supportive rather than demanding approach.

The impact of academic stress on students' mental health is another critical area of concern. A meta-analysis by Pascoe, Hetrick, and Parker (2020) revealed a strong correlation between high levels of academic stress and the prevalence of anxiety and depression among adolescents. Furthermore, prolonged exposure to stress

has been linked to physical health issues, including headaches, sleep disturbances, and weakened immunity (Sinha, Sharma, & Nepal, 2001).

Coping mechanisms play a vital role in mitigating the effects of academic stress. Studies have shown that students who employ adaptive coping strategies, such as time management, problem-solving, and seeking social support, are better equipped to handle academic stress (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004). On the other hand, maladaptive strategies, such as avoidance and substance use, tend to exacerbate stress and its adverse outcomes (Compas et al., 2001).

The role of educational institutions in addressing academic stress is also well-documented. Kumar and Bhukar (2013) emphasized the importance of counseling services and stress management programs in schools to help students develop resilience and coping skills. Additionally, incorporating mindfulness and relaxation techniques into the curriculum has been found to reduce stress and improve students' focus and emotional well-being (Meiklejohn et al., 2012).

Methodology

Normative Survey Method has been used, for collection of data from Higher Secondary Students of Villupuram and Cuddalore districts of Tamilnadu state.

Tools used in the Study

Academic Stress scale constructed validated by constructed and validated by Selvaraj A (2022).

Descriptive and Differential Analysis

The Academic Stress Scale has been administered to 753 students of Higher Secondary Schools. The data were collected from them. The Mean and SD were calculated for the entire sample and its sub-samples and are given in Table No. 1.

Table No. 1
Mean and SD scores of Academic Stress of students of Higher Secondary Schools

Sample and its sub-samples		N	Mean	SD
Entire sample		753	108.36	14.407
Gender	Male	338	110.40	15.713
	Female	415	106.70	13.034
Locality	Rural	390	109.35	15.447
	Urban	363	107.31	13.138
Type of School	Govt. school	396	108.43	13.621
	Private school	357	108.29	15.251
Place of Stay	Stayed at-Hostel	105	110.53	15.577
	Stayed at-Home	648	108.01	14.190
Medium of Instruction	Tamil	438	107.82	13.883
	English	315	109.12	15.095
Parental Education	Secondary level	154	107.49	14.257
	Higher Secondary level	428	110.48	14.942
	College level	171	103.86	11.920
Parental Occupation	Cooley	236	108.96	15.262
	Agriculture	164	109.29	13.671
	Business	186	106.38	12.980
	Employee	167	108.83	15.273

The level of Academic Stress of Higher Secondary Students is high (M=108.36).

The mean value for the sub sample of:

✓ Gender of students of Higher Secondary Schools indicates that Female students are having high level of Academic Stress than Male students.

✓ Locality of students of Higher Secondary Schools indicates that rural students are having high level of Academic Stress than urban students.

✓ Institutional Type of students of Higher Secondary Schools indicates that Govt. school students are having high level of Academic Stress than Private students.

✓ Place of stay of students of Higher Secondary Schools indicates that Home stayed students are having high level of Academic Stress than Hostel stayed students.

✓ Medium of Instruction of students of Higher Secondary Schools indicates that English medium students are having high Academic Stress than Tamil medium students.

✓ Parental Education of students of Higher Secondary Schools indicates that students with higher secondary level Educated Parents are having high level of Academic Stress than students of Secondary level and College level Educated parents.

✓ Parental Occupation of students of Higher Secondary Schools indicates that students whose parents are doing agriculture are having high level of Academic Stress than students whose parents are in other occupations like Cooley, doing Business and being employees.

Figure No. 1

Mean and SD scores of Academic Stress of students of Higher Secondary Schools
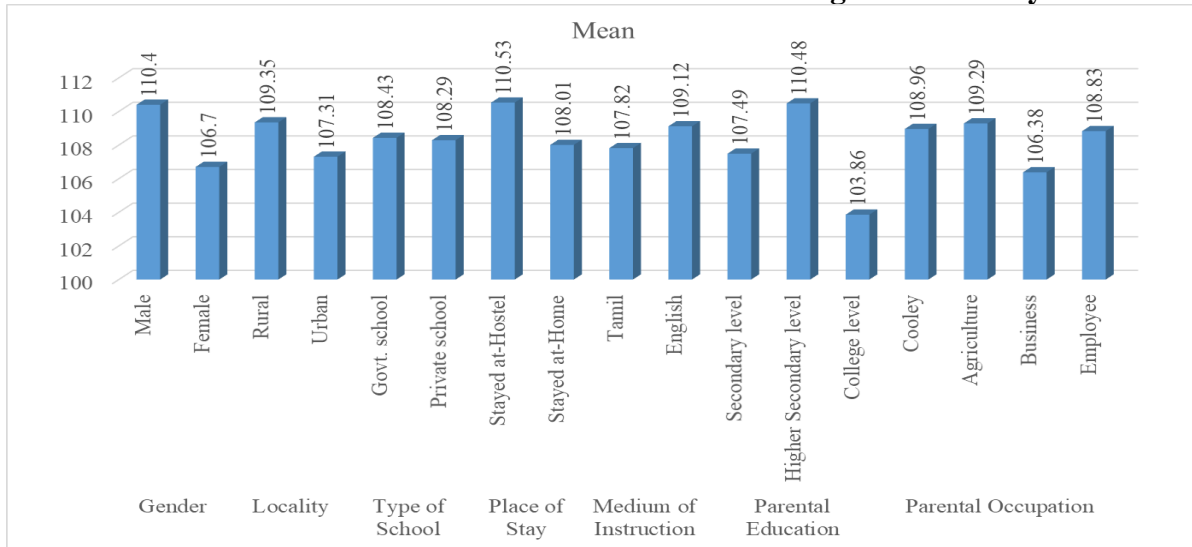
Null hypothesis

There is no significance in difference between Male and Female students of Higher Secondary Schools related with their Academic Stress.

The "t" value is computed to test the proposed Null hypothesis.

Table No. 2

Variation in Academic Stress Scores of students of Higher Secondary Schools related with their Gender

Sub-Samples	N	Mean	SD	Calculated t-value	State of Significance at 0.05 level
Male	338	110.40	15.713	3.464	Significant
Female	415	106.70	13.034		

As the 't' value is found to be significant, the framed null hypothesis is rejected.

Null hypothesis

There is no significance in difference between Rural and Urban students of Higher Secondary Schools related with their Academic Stress.

The "t" value is computed to test the proposed Null hypothesis.

Table No. 3
Variation in Academic Stress Scores of students of Higher Secondary Schools related with their Locality

Sub-Samples	N	Mean	S D	Calculated t-value	State of Significance at 0.05 level
Rural	390	109.35	15.447	1.919	Not significant
Urban	363	107.31	13.138		

As the 't' value is not found to be significant , the framed null hypothesis is accepted.
Null hypothesis
There is no significance in difference between Government and Private Higher Secondary Students related with their Academic Stress.
The "t" value is computed to test the proposed Null hypothesis.

Table No. 4
Variation in Academic Stress Scores of students of Higher Secondary Schools related with their Type of Institution

Sub-Samples	N	Mean	SD	Calculated t-value	State of Significance at 0.05 level
Govt.	396	108.43	13.621	0.140	Not significant
Private	357	108.29	15.251		

As the 't' value is not found to be significant, the framed null hypothesisis accepted.
Null hypothesis
There is no significance in difference between Day scholar and Hostel staying students of Higher Secondary Schools related with their Academic Stress.
The "t" value is computed to test the proposed Null hypothesis.

Table No. 5
Variation in Academic Stress Scores of students of Higher Secondary Schools related with their place of stay

Sub-Samples	N	Mean	S D	Calculated t-value	State of Significance at 0.05 level
Hostel	105	110.53	15.577	1.557	Not Significant
Home	648	108.01	14.190		

As the 't' value is found to be significant, the framed null hypothesis is accepted.
Null hypothesis
There is no significance in difference between Nuclear and English students of Higher Secondary Schools related with their Academic Stress.
The "t" value is computed to test the proposed Null hypothesis.

Table No. No.6

Variation in Academic Stress scores of students of Higher Secondary Schools related with their Medium of study

Sub-Samples	N	Mean	SD	Calculated t-value	State of Significance at 0.05 level
Tamil	438	107.82	13.883	1.201	Not significant
English	438	107.82	13.883		

As the 't' value is not found to be significant, the framed null hypothesis is accepted.

Findings of the Differential analysis

There is significance in difference between Male and Female students of Higher Secondary Schools related with their Academic Stress.

There is no significance in difference between Rural and Urban students of Higher Secondary Schools related with their Academic Stress.

There is no significance in difference between Government and Private Higher Secondary Students related with their Academic Stress.

There is no significance in difference between Day scholar and Hostel staying students of Higher Secondary Schools related with their Academic Stress.

There is no significance in difference between Tamil and English medium students of Higher Secondary Schools related with their Academic Stress.

Conclusion

The findings of this study highlight the multifaceted nature of academic stress among higher secondary students. The results reveal significant gender-based differences, with female students experiencing higher levels of stress than their male counterparts. Additionally, rural students, government school attendees, and those with parents engaged in agricultural occupations exhibit elevated stress levels, indicating that environmental and socio-economic factors play a pivotal role in shaping academic stress.

Interestingly, no significant differences were observed concerning urban versus rural locality, government versus private institutions, or day scholars versus hostel residents. These findings suggest that academic stress is a pervasive issue that transcends certain demographic boundaries.

Effective coping mechanisms and support systems are essential to mitigate the adverse effects of academic stress. Schools must implement stress management programs, counseling services, and mindfulness practices to equip students with adaptive coping skills. Moreover, parents and educators should collaborate to foster a supportive environment that balances academic demands with emotional well-being.

Future research should delve deeper into the interplay of socio-economic, cultural, and psychological factors influencing academic stress, thereby providing a more nuanced understanding of this critical issue. Addressing academic stress holistically will not only enhance students' academic performance but also contribute to their overall mental and physical health.

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