

IMPACT OF ACADEMIC STRESS ON SCHOOL GOING CHILDREN

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Abstract:

The existing study is entitled “Review article on academic stress and its impact on academic performance of school going children”. The main motive of this study was to explore the stress impact on the student's academic performance. Stress is the main role in student's academic performance. The objectives of the study were to, investigate the various factors of stress linked with student's performance and evaluate the impacts of stress on the academic performances of students on the basis of different research article. For this purpose systematic review process was adopted wherein research articles online and offline were screened to assess the role of stress and analysis were put forth in the form of observations and conclusions. After complete review process it was found that stress is a result of both academic as well as non academic factors. Academic factors were the major cause of stress in most students, followed by physical, social, and emotional.

Keywords : Impact of stress, Stress factors, School Children etc

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 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). As a result of these demands students can be under stress, since the demand is related to achievement of an academic goal. Academic Stress plays vital role for variation in academic achievement. It also leads to both physical and mental stress related diseases. With this view in mind, an attempt has been made in this paper to review the literature on academic stress among secondary school children in relation to certain variables.

Need of the study:

On the basis of research conducted online it is evident that more of attention has been paid over the higher secondary school students and college students with regards to the academic stress. Academic stress is less researched among school students. They are paid less attention as compared to higher secondary students and college students. Moreover education system of India is more focused on marks and grades, which compel children to work for longer hours at school and homes. This has resulted in deleterious effect on physical, mental and social health of students. The mental ability of students is deteriorating day by day in fulfilling the demands or pressure put forward by teachers, school and parents. This has resulted in development of serious health hazards like depression, anxiety, substance abuse and suicide ideation.¹ Thus there is need to study factors related to academic stress and their impact on school going children.

Objectives of the study :

1. To investigate the various factors of stress linked with student's performance.
2. To evaluate the impacts of stress on the school going children.

Concepts

1. Stress : 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; Selye, 1974). It is a process by which we perceive and cope with environmental threats and challenges (Myers and Health, 2005). Stress is viewed as a negative emotional, cognitive, behavioral and physiological process that occurs as a person tries to adjust to or deal with stressors.² Stress is widely accepted to have two opposite effects on individuals – good stress (eustress) and bad stress (distress). . A person's response towards stress depends on whether an event is appraised as a challenge or a threat.³ The various types of stress are, Acute stress, Episodic acute stress, Chronic stress. Academic stress refers to the unpleasant psychological situations that occur due to the educational expectations from parents, teachers, peers and family members, pressure of parents for academic achievement, present educational and examination system. Academic Stress among students have long been researched on, and researchers have identified stressors as too many coursework. Academic stress is a mental distress with respect to some anticipated frustration associated with academic

failure or even an awareness of possibility of such failure.⁴

2. Academic stress: Academic stress refers to the unpleasant psychological situations that occur due to the educational expectations from parents, teachers, peers and family members etc. Academic stress is a mental distress with respect to some anticipated frustration associated with academic failure or even an awareness of possibility of such failure.⁵ Academic Stress among students have long been researched on, and researchers have identified stressors as too many assignments, competitions with other students, failures and poor relationships with other students or lecturers. Academic problems have been reported to be most common source of stress for students.

3. School Children: The school children refers to group of class or secondary school education group comprising of 15 to 16 years of age children who are in X class.

4. Academic performance : Academic performance is the extent to which a student, teacher or institution has achieved their short or long-term educational goals.

Sources of Academic Stress

Bernstein *et al.* (2008) define the sources of stress as every circumstance or event that threatens to disrupt people's daily functioning and causes them to make adjustments⁶. These sources of stress are called "Stressors". Stressors are demands made by the internal or external environment that upset balance, thus affecting physical and psychological well-being and requiring action to restore balance.⁷ However, they differ from the degree of severity and duration of stress; what is stressful for an individual may not be a stressor for another. The sources of Academic stress are includes:

- School Factors
- Family Factors
- Social Factors

School Factors :

School is one of the many factors contributing to the stress being experienced by students in India. This stress is a result of too much homework, unsatisfactory academic performance, preparation for tests, lack of interest in a particular subject, and teacher's punishment. High expectations of teachers, parents, and self leads to stress which is usually an agony for students studying in schools. Course work assignment often keeping the students under continual examination forms the major source of

stress.⁸ Among the stress causing factors; Lack of parental help, congenial examination system, living up to parental expectation, and attitude of the teachers and fear of examination were found to be important one⁹. Berg and Keinan's (1986) found that imposing excessively high self expectation was the most trouble stressor leading to academic stress¹⁰. Followed by class room assignment overload examination related stresses were found to be causing high academic stress.¹¹ Students appeared to be under high pressure originating from course overload and academic evaluation procedures and least stressed by personal familiar and social factors.¹² Curriculum being highly concept laden, inappropriate school timings, high student-teacher ratio, nonconducive physical environment of classrooms, the absence of healthy teacher-student interaction, irrational rules of discipline, physical punishment, excessive or unbalanced school-work, teaching methodology, indifferent attitudes of teachers, overemphasis on weaknesses rather than strengths.¹³ Additionally, the following were recognized to be associated to academic stress based on studies: academic workload, attending lectures.¹⁴

Family Factors :

Family is also one of the important sources of academic stress which includes the pressure placed upon students due to the expectations of parents for their child to do well academically.¹⁶ This often results in parents encouraging their child to study for a long periods of time in order to attain high grades or percentages in examinations¹⁶. found that the incidence of parental pressure differs significantly with differences in the educational levels of the parents, mother 's occupation, number of private tutors, and academic performance. Fathers possessing a lower education level (non-graduates) were found to be more likely to pressurize their children regarding better academic performance. Indian children from non-disrupted families have higher academic stress than children from disrupted families. It is likely that the children from disrupted families get less attention and guidance from their parents regarding academic matters than do their counterparts in non-disrupted families. This, paradoxically, reduces their academic stress – thus highlighting the negative impact of the parental vigilance and persuasion on the academic lives of their children.¹⁷

Social Factors:

Formation of stress is highly associated with the social environment. Stress arises not only in a complicated and competitive environment but also in a monotonous and stimulus-less one.¹⁸

In a study the students reported their sources of stress were: 1) exams, 49%; 2) choosing a career, 12.83%; 3) family problems, 9.54%; 4) economic difficulties, 11.86%; 5) problems with boyfriend/girlfriend, 4.93%; 6) having a relative or a friend with an illness, 4.28%; 7) personal health problems, 3.62%; 8) homework, 3.29%; 9) teachers, 2.96%; and 10) other, 1.97 %. There were no great sex differences here, as the first five sources of stress were the same for men and women¹⁹.

Impact of academic stress on academic performance

Stress may have multiple effects on an individual across various levels: physiological, psychological and behavioural.

Effect of stress on nervous system

Some studies have shown that stress has many effects on the human nervous system and can cause structural changes in different parts of the brain.²⁰ Chronic stress can lead to atrophy of the brain mass and decrease its weight.²¹

Effect of stress on memory

The effect of stress on memory is highly dependent on the time of exposure to the stressful

stimulus and, in terms of the timing of the imposed stress, memory can be either better

or worse.²² Moreover, recent studies have shown that using a specific-timed schedule of exposure to stress not only affects hippocampus-dependent memory, but also striatum-dependent memory, which highlights the role of timing of the imposed stressful stimulus²³.

Effect of stress on cognition and learning

The adverse effects of stress on cognition are diverse and depend on the type, timing, intensity, and duration²⁴. Generally, it is believed that mild stress facilitates an improvement in cognitive function, especially in the case of virtual or verbal memory. However, if the intensity of stress passes beyond a predetermined threshold (which is different in each individual), it causes cognitive disorders, especially in memory and judgment.

Effect of stress on cardiovascular system

Stress, whether acute or chronic, has a deleterious effect on the function of the

cardiovascular system. Studies have shown that psychological stress can cause alpha-adrenergic stimulation and, consequently, increase heart rate and oxygen demand.^{25,26,27}

Conclusion

School, family, society and environment are considered major causes of academic stress, which threaten to disrupt students' daily functioning. It is true that increased

stress affects the nervous system, memory, cognition, learning behaviour, immune system, cardiovascular system to significant level. Moreover students may land into mental disorder, depression, stress and even suicidal tendency. Students can manage stress if it is perceived properly and treated accordingly with support of teacher, family and parents.

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