



Impact of Academic Stress on Mental Health : A Study of School going Adolescents

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ABSTRACT

Adolescents are generally more prone to stress and anxiety. Being in a transitional stage of between childhood and adulthood, adolescents have to confront with varied types of stresses and strains. The high expectations of parents and teachers in terms of scores and academic performance sometimes put extra mental burden on children, which may generally if not dealt effectively cause many physical or mental ailments. The present study has been conducted on a sample of 200 school going adolescent students of Bathinda district. Data were collected with the help of academic stress scale by Abha Bisht (1987) and Mental Health Inventory developed by Srivastava and Jagdish Rai (1986). The scores obtained were analyzed statistically and the findings of the study reveal that significant differences exist in mental health of adolescent with regard to level of academic stress they experience. Further significant difference is also found in the mental health of students with respect to their gender in terms of high and low level of academic stress. Hence it is suggested that parents should not overburden the children and should not set over expectations in terms of excellence in academic pursuits beyond the capability and capacity of the child.

KEYWORDS : academic, stress, mental health, adolescents, relationship

Introduction

The quality of nation depends upon the educated citizens which further depends upon good mental health and adjustment of adolescents. Education is the powerful instrument for the social, political and economic development of the country. A child's delicate and sensitive personality is influenced by the character of the parents, their mutual behavior towards the children, the child's reaction with siblings and other relatives in the family. Hence it is essential that they might be healthy in both mental and physical terms and should be trained to keep sound mental health and be adjustable to any kind of environment.

Adolescents are generally most prone to stress and anxiety. Being in a transitional stage between childhood and adulthood, adolescents have to confront with varied types of stresses and strains. The rising expectations of the parents in terms of scores and academic performance sometimes put extra burden on children, which may sometimes cause many physical or mental ailments, if not dealt effectively. But academic stress has an adverse effect on the mental health of adolescents, healthy parents and healthy teachers are always boon to the society. In the classroom situation the task of the teacher is always challenging and baffling, when even he faces the heterogeneous group with multiple diversity in the traits. It is very much true that some students are under active stress and some are normal, some are adjusted and some are maladjusted. In such situations, it is very important to understand each child and also find out the impact of negative traits and positive traits in the development of the child. If such individuals are not taken care, they may lose equilibrium of the self and with the environment. Hence it is very important to identify the adolescents possessing stress and also to see the effect of stress on the health of the adolescents.

Previously homes were the most important agency of imparting education but now the school have almost equivalent role to shape the personality of students. The sense of security, the love and affection which homes were supported to give have become responsibility of school. The modern teachers have to play the role of guide, friends and philosopher because either the parents are illiterate or they are over busy in their professional endeavor, but difficulty is that the teachers are not conscious of their obligations and they do not discharge their duty with sense of commitment and devotion. This results in lack of guidance among adolescents which cause greater stress among students. Lazarus (1984) defined "Stress is as a feeling of tension that is both emotional/physical, it can accrue in specific situation different people perceive different situation".

Academic stress is a kind of stress which generally occurs due to the extra work more than the capacity and capability in terms of examination, academics or content matter in some particular class. Jha (2004) described academic stress as mental or physical strain result-

ing from adjusting demands or challenging where the learner is to profit from instructions in a given area of learner. Diane (2005) stated that high academic stress resulting in low achievement motivation. Menhas (2006) in her study revealed significant relationship between academic stress and self-concept. Significant difference in emotional intelligence was found with respect to sex.

Good health depends on the state both body and mind. A healthy person is not only physically healthy but also mentally healthy. Mental health is an index which shows the extent to which a person has been able to meet his environment demands i.e. social, emotional or physical when a person finds himself trapped in a situation for which he does not have coping strategies to deal effectively, he gets himself mentally strained. This mental strain is generally reflected in symptoms like anxiety, tension, restless or hopeless. The emotional life of an individual plays a very important part in maintaining the mental health. By healthy emotional life is meant that a person has an attitude of love and affection towards his near and dear ones.

Mental health is a global term which refers to the condition of an individual which results from the normal organization and functioning of his mind. It is a combined outcome of five types of health like physical, emotional, moral, spiritual and social health. Mental Health is an important component of the total health of the person. Right thoughts, rights attitude and right actions are very useful and necessary to maintain good mental health. Mental health can also be called as the process of human self-satisfaction, self-realization and fully successful existence. A self-satisfied and healthy person has a state of mind that enables him to experience the greatest amount of happiness and to attain the maximum efficiency in spite of the presence of strain and conflict. He does not have the anxiety to live or the dinging attitude that everything must happen as suits his design. He is not keen to grab or hoard or have so many mouthful pleasures himself but give away more than taking and shares with others his leisure, time, energy, wealth and whatever he has. Crow and Crow (1951) defined "mental health is the state that deals with human welfare and persuades all fields of human relations". Chauhan (1987) defined "mental health is a condition which permits the maximum development of physical, intellectual and emotional status of the individual so that he can contribute maximum to the welfare of his ideas and aims in life". However, no significant difference in emotional intelligence was found with respect to organizational set up and stress. Gupta (2002) found that there is significant relationship between emotions, intelligence and mental health.

Rationale of the Study

One of the most challenging problems faced by psychologists, counselors, educational administration and teachers of today is the accurate prediction of psychological traits of children. This problem has aroused the attention of many psychologists and is assuming greater

importance day by day as our society has changed drastically. Because adolescence is the age of stress and strain and children have to cope up with many type of stressful situation, academic stress affects the personality make up of the child the most. It has adverse effect on the mental health of the students. Therefore knowledge of the stress management helps the adolescents to cope up with the problem of stress. Thus for this it becomes necessary to study the effect of academic stress on mental health. The present study will be helpful to school administrator, curriculum makers and counselors to provide educational and vocational guidance and counseling to the students. The study is also beneficial to the parents so that they can help their children in study and be particular about their need in the academic affairs and thus reducing their academic stress.

Objectives of the Study

1. To study the effect of academic stress on mental health of adolescents.
2. To study the effect of academic stress on mental health of male adolescents
3. To study the effect of academic stress on mental health of female adolescents.

Hypotheses of the Study

1. There is significant difference in mental health of the adolescents with regard to high and low level of academic stress.
2. There is significant difference in mental health of male adolescents with regard to high and low level of academic stress.
3. There is significant difference in mental health of female adolescents with regard to high and low level of academic stress.

Methodology

Sample was selected randomly from +1 class students including boys and girls from the Bathinda district. It was further divided into two categories i.e. male and female. To study the academic stress, scale of academic stress developed by Abhabisht(1987) was used. Mental health inventory developed by Srivasta and Jagdishrai(1987) was used to study the mental health. Data were analyzed quantitatively. Descriptive statistics namely mean, S.D. was calculated and t-test was employed to check the significance of the difference between means.

Results and Discussion –

The results so obtained after the statistical analysis of the data are presented in the form of tables and are discussed below.

TABLE 1 Statistical Scores on Mental Health of Adolescents with regard to Levels of Academic Stress

Variable	Level of academic stress	N	Mean	S.D.	t-value
Mental Health	High academic stress	51	92.45	20.49	2.36*
	Low academic stress	55	99.96	10.9	

***Significant at 0.05 levels**

From the results of table 1 it is found that the mean score of mental health of adolescents whose academic stress is high is 92.45, SD is 10.9, while the mean score of mental health of adolescents whose academic stress is low is 99.96, S.D. is 20.49 and t-ratio is 2.36. Significant difference is obtained in the mental health of adolescents due to high and low level of academic stress as t-value is found to be significant at 0.05 level (t=2.36). Therefore as per the result of the present study mental health of adolescents is very much influenced by academic stress. Mean scores of adolescents on the variable of mental health show that mental health of adolescents who have high level of academic stress is lower as compared to the adolescents who have low level of academic stress. This may be due to the reason that in modern times either the parents are illiterate or they are over busy in their professional work, so they do not guide the adolescents properly. Teachers have to play the role of guide, friend and philosopher, but the difficulty is that teachers are not conscious of their obligations and they do not discharge their duty with commitment and devotion. Sometimes teachers cannot spare time due to their own workload

and cannot justify with the students. This results in lack of guidance among adolescents which cause more stress among them and their mental health deteriorates. Thus the hypothesis no. 1 that there is a significant difference in mental health of adolescents with regard to high and low level of academic stress is accepted in the present study.

TABLE 2 Statistical Scores on Mental Health of Male Adolescents with regard to Levels of Academic Stress

Variable	Level of academic stress	N	Mean	S.D.	t-value
Mental Health	High academic stress	16	80.67	22.44	2.54*
	Low academic stress	40	93.64	14.67	

***Significant at 0.05 levels**

From the results presented in table 2 it is found that the mean score on mental health of male adolescents whose academic stress is high, is 80.67, with S.D. 22.44. While the mean score of mental health of male adolescents whose academic stress is low is 93.64 and SD 14.67. t-value is 2.54, which is significant at 0.05 level of significance. Hence significant difference is obtained in the mental health of male adolescents due to high and low level of academic stress as t-value is found to be significant at 0.05 levels (t=2.54). Mean scores of male adolescents show that mental health of male adolescents who have high levels of academic stress is lower as compared to male adolescents who have low level of academic stress. Which shows the direct effects of academic stress on mental health of male adolescent children. Hence the adolescents who have low academic stress keep comparatively better mental health scores and vice versa. This may be due to the reason that there is cut throat competition in all academic aspects. The adolescents have to face this severity of the completion in order to get admissions in various academic pursuits and areas. Not doing well in class +1 after opting for science or commerce becomes a cause of frustration and high academic stress which in turn leads to poor mental health. Thus the hypothesis 2, that there is a significant difference in mental health of male adolescents with regard to high and low level of academic stress is accepted in the present study.

TABLE 3 Statistical Scores on Mental Health of Female Adolescents with regard to Level of Academic Stress.

Variable	Level of academic stress	N	Mean	S.D.	t-value
Mental Health	High academic stress	34	71.07	19.61	2.16*
	Low academic stress	14	83.88	12.24	

***Significant at 0.05 levels**

From the results of table 3 it is found that the mean score of mental health of female adolescents whose academic stress is high is 71.07 with S.D. 19.61. While the mean score of mental health of female adolescents whose academic stress is low is 83.88 and SD 12.24. The t-value is 2.16, which shows significant differences at 0.05 level. Hence female adolescents differ significantly on mental health due to high and low level of academic stress as t-value is found to be significant at 0.05 levels (t=2.16). Mean score of female adolescents on the variable of mental health show that mental health of female adolescents who have high levels of academic stress is lower as compared to female adolescents who have low level of academic stress. This may be due to the reason that there is parental pressure for excellence in performance irrespective of the potential of the girl's students. This leads to high academic stress and the mental health of the girl's adolescent

deteriorates. Thus the hypothesis no. 3 that there is a significant difference in mental health of female adolescents with regard to high and low level of academic stress is accepted in the present study.

Conclusions and Educational Implications

From the above results it is clear that academic stress put negative impact on the mental health of the adolescents irrespective of their gender and level of stress. There is significant difference in the mental health of adolescents with regard to high and low level of academic stress as t-values are found to be significant. The negative and significant differences exist between the academic stress and mental health. Hence it is evident that the need of the hour is to reduce the academic stress among adolescents in order to keep them in good mental health and sound mental well-being. As sound mind resides in the sound body hence stress should be laid down to make the adolescents involved in the physical activities also. The findings will help the teachers in understanding the child psychology, so that they should not over burden the students with work and should not over expect beyond the capabilities of the child. The school curriculum can be planned and organized in such way that it provides equal opportunities for participation to all students, which will definitely boost their performance both in academic and extracurricular activities. The study will help the teacher in comprehending the direction of mental health of students (high and low), the teacher will try to nurture responsiveness and reciprocity in children in order to develop positive and sound mental health. Emphasis should be given on different vocation instead of choosing some specific vocation and pushing the child toward it.

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