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# Causes and Effects of Academic Stress with Special Reference to Adolescents

Manisha Swami

Assistant Professor (Vidya Sambal), Govt. Girls College, Nokha, Bikaner (Rajasthan), India

**ABSTRACT:** Stress can be defined as a state of worry or mental tension caused by a difficult situation. Stress is a natural human response that prompts us to address challenges and threats in our lives. Everyone experiences stress in daily life. The way we respond to stress, however, makes a big difference to our overall well-being. A young person can feel pressure from outside sources (e.g., the increasing competitive nature of being accepted into a university). Academic stress can also be self-imposed. Living in a culture that is performance-based creates intense competition, and for adolescents this can manifest as academic pressure. Academic stress has been introduced as a risk factor in different studies, but the risk level varies by student groups. Adolescents are particularly prone to stress than young adults and older groups because of the corresponding age and transition related changes in their life. This Paper focuses on the important causes of the academic stress facing by Adolescents and the Impact of these causes on their lives.

**KEYWORDS:** Adolescent, Academic stress, Physical and Mental response

## I. INTRODUCTION

Students of high school belong to adolescence stage of human span of life. Adolescence is the second decade of life; the period of transition between childhood and adulthood which begins with the onset of puberty and ends with the acceptance of adult roles and responsibilities. This is a crucial period of life. Anxieties, frustration, identity crises, looking out for support, indecisiveness, dependency needs and independence are associated with this period.

The concept of stress and its effect's upon victims is an ancient one. The word 'stress' itself is an abbreviation of the original term 'distress'. It has come to modern usage through old French and middle English. The only independent variable of the present research endeavor is academic stress. As we know that modern life is full of stresses and strains. All of us in this world face stressors in one or the other area of our life. Even school going children are under constant stress due to cut throat competitions and parental pressures. Stress related to health, education demands, work environment, and relationships all have their effects on the physical and emotional welfare of the individual.

Although Education is the powerful instrument for the social, political and economic development of a country and is a rope that can carry us to greatness. Similarly, Education system prepares individuals for their role in society and it shapes self-perception of adolescents, and gives them the foundation for their future participation in society that is not limited to participation in the work place (Evans, 2006).<sup>1</sup> But the present education system creates much stress as it encourages competition and comparison between individuals. In this modern age, there is a growing emphasis on the professionalization of education which is subsequently becoming the need of the day. So far as education and employment is concerned, it is a fact that in the job market, there is a lot of competition where professional education, skill, and other personality attributes play a very crucial role in the competitive fray, especially among young and novice competitors. Stress among undergraduate and graduate students is multifactorial, arising from both academic and non-academic factors, including socio-cultural, environmental, and psychological attributes<sup>2</sup> Academic factors are the predominant cause of stress in most students, followed by physical, social, and emotional.

### Objectives of the Study:

- The following are the main objectives of this study.
- To analyses the sources of Academic Stress to the Adolescents.
- To Find the Major Sources of Academic Stress among Adolescents.
- Analyzing the Effects of Academic Stress on Adolescents.

## II. METHODOLOGY

This article has been prepared mainly on the basis of secondary data. For this, various books, works and research articles related to academic stress have been studied.



#### **Review of some Important Literature:**

- **Bartwal and Singh (2014)** examined academic stress of school going adolescents. Results of the study revealed that there was no significant gender difference existed with regard to academic stress in rural and urban male and female adolescents.
- **Lal (2014)** investigated academic stress among adolescent in relation to intelligence and demographic factors. Findings revealed an insignificant difference in academic stress of average and low I.Q. students but significant difference existed in academic stress of male and female students as male students had less academic stress than female students. Findings also showed that there were no significant differences in academic stress of rural and urban institutions students as well as government and private senior secondary school students.
- **A study by Dhull and Kumari (2015)** reported a significant difference between academic stress of male and female adolescents. Female were found to be under more academic stress as compared to their male counterparts.

#### **Causes of Stress**

Stress is the physical and mental response of the body to demands made upon it. It is the result of our reaction to outside events, not necessarily the events themselves. Different things cause stress in different people. Stress among the Adolescents can be due to a number of reasons such as parents' expectations, pressure to perform well academically and a number of intra and inter-personal factors operating either together or in isolation. Besides, most of the high school students apart from their school, attend coaching classes preparing them for entry into various professional courses in several institutions. They thus experience additional strain and stress- physical as well as mental. Hence academic problems have been reported to be the most common source of stress for students (Aldwin & Greenberger, 1987; Clark & Rieker, 1986; Evans & Fitzgibbon, 1992; Felsten & Wilcox, 1992; Mallinckrodt et al., 1989; Struthers et al., 2000).<sup>3</sup> Some of the reasons are giving below which increase academic stress in the students specially to the Adolescents.

#### **Examination Fear:**

In a number of studies, the most frequently factors contributing to stress and anxiety around the examination periods were extensive course loads, lack of physical exercise, and long duration of exams, reported by the students (Harikiran et al., 2012; Hashmat et al., 2008; Sangsiry and Sail, 2006; Shah et al., 2010).<sup>4</sup> Parents and teachers perceive the family and school reputation at stake in the examination performance of their wards and turn the pressure further to them.

#### **Excess Homework**

When students are overwhelmed or frustrated by homework, it makes it harder for him or her to complete assignments. This can cause a stressful cycle where homework piles up and your child doesn't have the time or energy to complete it all—leading to even more stress.

#### **Workload Burden:**

Whether it's advanced-level classes or the amount of studying required, a heavy workload can be a major source of stress for students. This is especially common for older high school students as they start making their post-secondary plans.

#### **Poor Management Skills:**

Students with poor management skills tend to experience more stress in school. This is usually because they aren't properly prepared with the tools or the understanding needed to learn. If those organization skills don't improve they may continue to fall behind, leading to more stress and frustration about school.

#### **Lake of time for relax:**

Students with busy schedules can quickly become overwhelmed because they are left with no free time to relax. As your child progresses from elementary school to high school, the amount and difficulty level of school work increases and students without good time management skills can experience even more stress.

#### **Poor Sleep Schedule:**

Not getting enough sleep makes it difficult for students to concentrate and learn effectively. This can lead to feelings of stress for your child when he or she isn't able to perform well in class or on assignments. In fact, studies have shown that students who don't get the required 8-10 hours of sleep each night are more likely to feel stressed than students who do.

#### **Insufficient Support:**

A lack of support from parents or teachers, even if it's only perceived, can add a lot of stress to students. They may feel that a lot is expected of them, but that they don't have a strong enough support system (whether



emotional or practical) to achieve their goals. This is another cause of stress can affect high achieving students in particular.

**Transitioning to Different Environment:**

Making a major move can be a stressful time for many students, whether it's starting at a new school or making the transition from elementary school to high school. New classes, new teachers, and new routines can all be stressful for students, and take time to adjust to.

**Increasing Level of Classes:**

As they progress through school and start taking more advanced classes, the increased difficulty can cause stress for students. This is very common for teens entering their high school years. As classes get harder, it's important to address challenges early so your child can catch up before he or she falls too far behind.

**Changing in Daily Routine:**

A routine including dedicated homework time and a consistent sleep schedule helps guide students through their day. When changes to the usual routine start to happen, your child may find it more difficult to manage his or her time, leading to more stress.

**Effects of stress:**

It is of no doubt that some people are more prone to suffer from the effects of stress, but no one is immune to it. Only the threshold varies. Stress affects different parts of the body and can lead to various disease. Excessive stress affects the body in many ways. Excessive stress affects the body in many ways. Some of these side effects are normal and some are extremely dangerous which can even lead to the death of a person. The effects caused by stress can be studied under the following points

**Effect on Physical Health:**

Studies showed that stress and anxiety may even have a negative effect on cardiovascular health of otherwise healthy teenagers. It also can harm a person's emotional well-being as well. Stress and anxiety levels affect the students academically and change the way the person thinks and acts during school or time spent in studying. The American Youth Policy Forum (2008) writes that many youth drop out in the ninth grade, at the peak of adolescence, both because they are failing or have low test scores and because they are not adjusting well to high school.

**Effect on Mental Health:**

A certain amount of stress can be mentally stimulating but too much can affect our thinking ability. Thoughts may become jumbled and confused. Thinking becomes focused on worrying. We may become preoccupied with problems. It becomes much harder to make decisions or find solutions to problems. Thinking negatively and fearing the worst increases worry and stress.

**Effect on Emotions:**

People respond to stress in many different ways. Common emotional effects are irritability, impatience, anger, frustration, fear, anxiety, self-doubt, panic, despondency, feelings of inadequacy, insecurity, hopelessness, unhappiness, emotional withdrawal and depression.

**III. CONCLUSION**

Based on the findings of the above study, it can be said that as the nature of education is changing in the present times, the level of stress regarding education among teenagers is also increasing. At the student level, academic stress from different sources affects adolescent health. This is true that students not only experience physical and academic challenges when they enter high school, but they also develop increased cognitive abilities that challenge them to see and understand the world in new ways. The major challenges of students are: poor retention and recall, lack of appreciation from their parents (loss of motivation), school environment, personal anxieties, fear of teachers, exam phobia, perpetual insecurity, conflicting expectations from the parents and the society, the growing competition, fear of failure or success and parental attitudes. Hence, academic stress plays an important role in students' life and it accounts for variation in performance, achievement or success.



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