



Unraveling the Threads of Academic Stress: Exploring Theoretical Constructs and Coping Mechanisms

Samiran Kalita¹, Dr. Nisanth P.M.²

¹Research Scholar, Department of Education, Rajiv Gandhi University, Arunachal Pradesh

²Assistant Professor, Department of Education, Rajiv Gandhi University, Arunachal Pradesh

¹Email ID- samirankalita44@gmail.com

²Email ID- nisanthpm@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Academic stress has a significant impact on students' lives and has a direct impact on their performance and success. A major cause of stress among students is their academic stress. Academic stress plays a crucial role in order to mobilize individuals' potential to enhance their efficiency. This paper explores various facets of academic stress and its causes on educational setting. The Researcher attempt to identify the sources of academic stress through in-depth analysis of secondary data and discusses various coping mechanisms how to alleviate stress among students and become more driven to learn and successful learners.

Keywords: Academic Stress, Students, Stressors, Coping stress.

Conceptual Background

Stress is the psychological, physiological, and behavioural reaction that a person has when they feels there is an imbalance between the demands made on them and their capacity to fulfill those demands. Over time, this imbalance results in ill health (Palmer, 1989). Levine and Ursin (1991) claims that stress is a component of an adaptive biological system, where a state is produced when a central processor detects an informational disparity. "Any condition, acting internally or externally, that makes it difficult to adjust and requires extra effort on the part of the person to maintain a state of balance both internally and with the external environment," is the basic definition of stress.

Numerous experiences in person's life give rise to feelings and negative emotions like anger, frustration, anxiety which in turns cause stress in a person. In response to a challenge or demand, the body produces stress. At times, stress can be beneficial but long-term stress can cause serious health problems. According to Banerjee's (2001) report, approximately 25,000 students between the ages of 18 and 20 commit suicide each year between March and June, which is the examination month.

Academic stress has a significant impact on students' performance and success. Academic stress refers to psychological problems induced by educational expectations from instructors, parents, friends, and family, parental pressure for academic achievement, the current educational system, burden of homework

and so on. Gupta and Khan (1987) define academic stress as mental distress with respect to some anticipated frustration associated with academic failure or even an awareness of possibility of such failure. Academic stress among students has long been investigated, and researchers have identified stressors like too many assignments, competitions with other students, failures and poor relationships with other students or lecturers (Fairbrother and Warn, 2003). Competition for grades and rankings might lead to greater stress among students. Academic stress plays an important role in mobilizing individuals' potential to perform more efficiently. Students' stress reduction strategies frequently include effective time management, social support, positive reappraisal, and participation in leisure activities to minimize stress (Murphy & Archer, 1996).

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To identify the various causes of academic stress in educational setting.
2. To discuss the effective strategies or models of coping with stress.

Causes of Academic Stress

- 1. Parents over expectation-** No two people are the same in terms of their physical, psychological, or intellectual abilities. However, parents are unaware of these differences, thus they accentuate their child's previous flaws by comparing them to other children. They have high hopes for their child's academic career and future work. As a result, they compel their child to study more and more, frequently beyond what their minds can handle. The children experience academic stress as a result of this.
- 2. Unattainable goals-** Certain adolescents fail to recognize their distinctive capabilities and potentialities. They may strive for ambitious objectives. They do so due to the influence of their neighbors or friends who have similar objectives. They remain oblivious to the fact that they are incapable of accomplishing their goals independently, yet they relentlessly strive for them and experience disillusionment. They reside within a self-constructed realm of imagination. No matter how determined they are, they may not be able to attain their objectives, which contributes to their heightened stress levels.
- 3. Heavy Workload-** In the present era, educational institutions are excessively concerned with rankings, leading to an excessive burden on students through the assignment of demanding tasks and daily assessments. Students frequently manage a hectic timetable encompassing academic courses, employment, athletic pursuits and various obligations. Engaging in these activities can enhance students' competitiveness in college admissions while imparting important values such as accountability and teamwork. Nevertheless, substantial workloads also result in pupils being overwhelmed, experiencing high levels of stress.
- 4. Time Management-** Stress among students, whether secondary or tertiary, is also a result of poor time management. Managing studies, social obligations, and family can also be challenging.

5. **Career-** Job Stress is a chronic illness that is prevalent among today's youth and has a detrimental impact on an individual's performance and mental health. There are numerous factors that contribute to employment stress, such as intense competition, lack of job stability.
6. **Academics-** Stress symptoms including such as worry, insomnia, changes in appetite, and mood swings can also be brought on by poor academic performance. Students become stressed out because they are afraid about their exams and workload. Students may also experience stress due to lot of assignments.
7. **Lack of Support-** Lack of support from parents or instructors can cause a great deal of stress for students. They may perceive a high level of expectations placed upon them, yet lack a robust support system, be it emotional or practical; to attain their objectives. This particular cause of stress can specifically impact high-achieving students.
8. **Feeling Unworthy and Unappreciated-** Parents and teachers frequently neglect to recognize a student's accomplishments. Reinforcement, positive feedback, appreciation can go a long way toward helping the learner feel deserving and confident. The best treatment for stress is positive reinforcement.

Sources of Academic Stress

- Too many assignments
- Competition with peers
- Fear of academic failure
- High Parental Expectation
- Academic overload
- Examination fear
- Vastness of syllabus
- Too many tests
- Having a poor relationship with other students

Types of Stress

Seaward (1999) distinguished between three types of stress: Eustress, Neustress, and Distress.

1. Eustress, or positive stress, is triggered by any event or scenario that an individual finds inspiring and motivating.
2. Sensory inputs with no discernible impact are described by neustress. It is regarded as neutral in nature.
3. Stress is commonly equated with distress, which is viewed negatively. Distress can be classified as either acute or chronic. Acute stress is characterized by its intensity and quiet appearance, while chronic stress may not be as obvious or strong but tends to stay longer.

Stressors:

A stressor is something that causes the production of stress hormones. Stressors fall into two main categories:

Physiological (or Physical) Stressors: Stressors that place a lot of strain on our bodies are referred to as Physiological (or physical) stressors. Examples of these stressors include excessive heat or cold, injuries, chronic illnesses, and pain.

Psychological Stressors: It include things like people, places, things, comments, events, and anything else that makes us feel uncomfortable or threatened.

Researchers are now suggesting that stressors can be further classified as follows:

Absolute Stressors: These are stressors that are stressful to everyone who is exposed to them. These are objective, global forces like tsunamis and earthquakes, among others.

Relative Stressors: These are stressors that are only stressful to people who are exposed to them. These are subjective stressors that generate a variety of responses in individuals for example responses to time constraint at work, traffic, paying taxes, writing an exam). Stressors are external or internal demands that disrupt equilibrium, impacting bodily and psychological well-being and prompting action to restore balance (Lazarus and Cohen, 1977). They differ, however, in terms of the severity and duration of stress; what is stressful for one individual may not be severe for another.

Coping with Stress

Each and every person at some point throughout their lives, confronted with challenges yet, not everyone will respond to these challenges in the same way. Stress may not impact all people equally, yet stress can lead to illness and poor experiences. Because of this, learning how to deal with stress is an essential component. In order to overcome, reduce, or tolerate stress or conflict, coping skills are a purposeful attempt to handle a personal or interpersonal problem. Individuals vary in their capacity to tolerate or handle stress, and the specific coping strategy they choose is greatly impacted by their personality traits, the nature of the stressor, and the social context in which they find themselves. There are various models of stress coping strategies. They are discussed below:

- a) **The Problem Focused model-** Problem-focused coping involves actively modifying the stressor itself, such as by directly solving the problem. On the other hand, emotion-focused coping focuses on managing or controlling the emotions linked to a particular stressor, such as by crying out to let out your feelings. Problem-focused coping involves cognitive processes, actions, and strategies that are directed towards mitigating or eliminating the impact of a stressful event. This approach is most successful when individuals possess the belief that they have the ability to modify their circumstances/change their situations. This is a paradigm that is often used, and it classifies coping reactions according to their function, which is either emotion-centered or problem-centered. The cognitive appraisal model developed by Lazarus in 1974 serves as the foundation for this paradigm.
- b) **Transactional Model of Stress-** The transactional model of Stress and coping refers to a method used to assess how individuals deal with challenging circumstances. Stressful situations are perceived as the interactions between an individual and their surroundings. However, external pressures significantly influence these interactions. These transactions involve two significant types of appraisal. Primary appraisal and Secondary appraisal. The primary appraisal refers to an individual's assessment of the

significant consequences of an event, categorizing them as either stressful, positive, controllable and challenging. And the second appraisal is the assessment of the individual's accessible resources and alternatives that can be utilized to replicate the real stressor. It is an action that a person takes to find a solution.

- c) **The Approach/Avoidance Model-** Approach, active coping indicates desire to actively seek out information, show concern, and formulate strategies. On the other side, avoidance, blunting, passive coping, and repression show a propensity to ignore information, exhibit minimal concern, and divert oneself from unpleasant situations. (Harbeck et.al 1990). Roth and Cohen (1986) propose that approach type tactics comprise cognitive efforts to alter one's thinking about an issue or behavioral efforts to directly address the problem. Avoidance techniques refer to behavioral, cognitive, or emotional strategies that are used to get rid of stressor.
- d) **The Primary/Secondary Control Model-** Rothbaum et al., (1982) defined primary control coping as "putting one's wishes into alignment with the environment." Secondary control coping involves aligning with external elements or maximizing one's fit with existing situations. Primary coping is necessary for actively changing changeable circumstances, such as studying to improve a class grade, while secondary coping is needed for psychological adaptation to unchangeable circumstances, such as grieving the death of a grandparent.

Managing Academic Stress

The ability to study more effectively is not the only factor that determines success in life; parents should be aware of this fact and assist their children in developing their skills in areas where they have the potential to excel and compete. children who come from challenging situations, such as slums, poverty, and studying under harsh conditions, and who achieve success in the pursuit of education, sports, art, literature, and music. Parents should be mindful, however, that success in one's professional life does not necessarily guarantee success in one's personal life. As a consequence of this, there should be a greater emphasis placed on care that is suitable, as well as on the upbringing and socialization of children.

Students must learn to regulate their own stress in order to combat it; this means that the answer to stress is personal. Individual strategies include setting priorities and goals, prioritizing tasks, delegating, learning how to interact with people, altering behaviour, exercising, unwinding, and creating a network of friends, family, and coworkers for social support.

Conclusion

This study majorpurpose is to investigate the factors that contribute to stress among students and to discuss about the strategies that may be used to deal with stress. The sources of academic stress, on the other hand, may have an effect on the students' health and performance, and the consequences of stress may vary depending on the sources of stress. The second thing that needs to be done is to organize some workshops for students so that they can learn how to deal with the stress that they experience in their academic lives, how to manage it, and how to learn some effective techniques for managing their time and adapting their

study methods. This will allow them to lessen the negative effects that the stress has on their health and their performance.

References

- [1]. Banerjee, S. (2001). Youth and Exam Stress. *Social Welfare*, 48:17
- [2]. Fairbrother K., & Warn, J. (2003). Workplace Dimensions, Stress and Job Satisfaction, *J. Managerial Psychol.* 18(1): 8-21.
- [3]. Goel, A. & Goel, S. L. (2005). *Stress management and education*. New Delhi: Deep & Deep Publications Private Limited.
- [4]. Greenberg, J. S. (2009). *Comprehensive stress management- 10th Edition*. New Delhi: Tata McGraw Hill Education Private Limited.
- [5]. Gupta, K & Khan, b. (1987). Anxiety levels as factors in concept formation. *Indian Journal of Psychological Report*, 31(3), 187-192.
- [6]. Joshi, B. K. (200). *Stress management*. Jaipur: Pointer Publishers.
- [7]. Kadapatti , M.G., & Vijayalaxmi, A.H.M. (2012). Stressors of Academic Stress- A Study on Pre-University Students. *IJSR*, 3(1), 171-175. <https://www.ijsr.in/upload/428127980Paper%20%2030.pdf>
- [8]. Kumar, M., & Bawthra, R. (2020). A Study on Stress Management Strategies of Students. *Asian Journal of Science and Technology*, 11(1), 10788 10791. <http://www.journalajst.com/sites/default/files/issues-pdf/7902.pdf>
- [9]. Prabhu, S. (2015). A Study on Academic Stress Among Higher Secondary Students. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Intervention*, 4(10), 63-68. [https://www.ijhssi.org/papers/v4\(10\)/Version-2/I04102063068.pdf](https://www.ijhssi.org/papers/v4(10)/Version-2/I04102063068.pdf)
- [10]. Puja, M. (2023). A Study of Stress Coping Strategies of Higher Secondary School Students in Relation to their Self-Efficacy and Academic Stress. [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Banaras Hindu University, Banaras.

Cite this Article:

Samiran Kalita, Dr. Nisanth P.M., " *Unraveling the Threads of Academic Stress: Exploring Theoretical Constructs and Coping Mechanisms* ", *International Journal of Scientific Research in Modern Science and Technology (IJSRMST)*, ISSN: 2583-7605 (Online), Volume 2, Issue 12, pp. 68-73, December 2023.

Journal URL: <https://ijrmst.com/>