

ACADEMIC STRESS IN RELATION TO MENTAL HEALTH AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS

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Abstract

Mental health is an important part of public health. According to the international public health report between 20 and 40 percent of the general population suffer from poor mental health - everything from severe psychiatric disorders such as psychosis to milder mental health symptoms such as nervousness, anxiety or sleeping problems. Poor mental health has large economic and social consequences both for the individual and society. Although, a systematic structure improves the performance of students in different spheres, to introduce an atmosphere conducive to intellectuals and to minimize the stress on students. The present paper studied the academic stress in relation to mental health and socio-economic status of West Bengal. The study utilized descriptive survey method. The sample comprised of 200 secondary school students of West Bengal. Bisht Battery of Stress Scale(BBSS) developed by Bisht (1987), Mental Health inventory developed by Rai and Srivastva (1986) and Socio-Economic Status Scale developed by Bhardwaj (1978) was used as a measure of mean scores and correlation for analysis of the study. Data was collected with the help of selected tools. The results were shown that academic stress, mental health and socio-economic status were correlated and there was significant negative correlation between these variables. It has been interpreted from the results that there was significant effect of academic stress on mental health of secondary school students of West Bengal.

Keywords: Academic Stress, Mental Health, Socio-economic Status, Secondary School Students.

Introduction

Present age is the age of competition. Scientific and technological advancement all over the globe has made man very conscious and sensitive about his studies, vocation, life style, relations etc. This immense progress has given rise to certain problems. One of the major problems of today's world is "stress". Every person has a unique nature as regard to capabilities, attitude, personality characteristics and interests. The adolescents have a major impact of stress due to bloodshed competition in every field. The parents and teachers are eager to know the various factors, which enhance the stress among students. Academic achievement expectations have created so much fear among the students that they are not able to utilize their basic potential. They are to only concentrate on their academic performance. Academic stress is not only due to the higher expectations of the teachers, society and parents but also because of the level of mental health and socio-economic status of the family of the student. Every child is not able to get first division as the level of mental health is not the same in every child. There is also an important factor as the socio-economic status of the family of the student. It is a general tendency between the present generation's middle and low income group student that they want to lift up the standard of living of their family. To lift this level up they have to get good jobs and thus they are more career conscious than the rich income group students. So the level of academic stress is more on them than the other students. Mental health is the ability to adjust satisfactorily to the various strains of the environment we meet in life & mental hygiene as the means to assure this adjustment. Thus on the basis of above mentioned definitions of mental health it can be said that the term mental health has been used in different ways by psychologists, psychiatrists and is influenced by multiplicity of factors like intelligence, personality, education level, academic achievement and physical health etc. Emotionally healthy individuals accept themselves as they are with all their weaknesses as well as their strengths. They remain in contact with reality and they are able to deal with stress and frustration. They also act independently to outside influences and show genuine concern for other people. Socio-Econom-

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ic Status refers to social and economic standing. A person is assigned a position in the social class hierarchy more in terms of such factors as income, occupation, location of the home, ancestors, group membership and education. If a person's parents are highly educated and their occupation is of high level with large income and material possession is of superior quality, then the Socio-Economic Status is indicated as high, otherwise he is of low Socio-Economic Status.

Need of the Study

A person is assigned a position in the social class hierarchy more in terms of such factors as income, occupation, location of the home, ancestors, group membership and education. Modern age is the age of cut throat competition, which results in tensions and mental illness. In the present era, the educational scene is fast changing. Curriculum and co-curricular offerings have tremendously expanded, gripping the students in the adjustment problems. Feeling the insecurity, conflicts within themselves, bad company and low achievement creates emotional tensions and stress among the students. Unable to face the changing trends in the society, the students are taking to drug addiction and even the suicidal note is increasing. A systematic structure of investigation must be involved to improve the performance of students in different spheres, to introduce an atmosphere conducive to intellectuals and to minimize the stress on students. Present study is a humble effort to answer the query i.e. why students feel stressed and is this stress related to their mental health.

Objectives of the Study

1. To study the relationship between academic stress and mental health of secondary school students.
2. To study the relationship between academic stress and socio- economic status of secondary school students.

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant correlation between academic stress and mental health of secondary school students.
2. There is no significant correlation between academic stress and socio-economic status of secondary school students.

Design and Sample of the Study

In the present investigation mental health and socio economic status are the two independent variables whereas academic stress is the dependent variable. The main purpose of the study is to see that how far the independent variable influences the dependent variables. For the collection of data, the investigator first of all chooses favorable sampling

technique. In the present study, the investigator has adopted stratified randomization technique. The sample consisted of 200 students of secondary schools of West-Bengal.

Tools to be Used

Following tools were employed to collect the data for the present study:-

1. Bisht Battery of Stress Scale(BBSS) developed by Abha Rani Bisht (1987)
2. Mental Health inventory developed by Dr. Jagdish Rai and Dr. A.K. Srivastva(1986)
3. Socio-Economic Status Scale developed by R.L.Bhardwaj (1978)

Method of Data Collection

After the selection of appropriate test for data collection and determination about the sample to be selected, the principals of selected schools were approached for the permission for the collection of data. They were kind enough to give their consent for data collection. The time schedule was prepared for each school and principals were informed accordingly. As per the time schedule, the investigator along with the class teacher visited the class. Scale of academic stress, mental health and socio-economic status were given together to the students. Before the administration of the test, the instructions were read out for each tool. After the administration of the test, scoring of all tests was done with the help of manual, scoring key and other relevant material.

Analysis and Interpretation

Coefficient of Correlation between Academic Stress and Mental Health of Secondary School Students

Sr.No.	Variables	N	r	Interpretation
1.	Academic Stress	200	-0.56	Significant at .05 & .01 level
2.	Mental Health	200		

The correlation between academic stress and mental health of secondary school students is -0.56. The 'r' in order to be significant at .05 level of significance and .01 level of significance should be .195 and .254 respectively. Since obtained 'r' is much higher than the tabulated values. So it is concluded that there is significant negative correlation between the academic stress and mental health of secondary school students. Hence hypothesis -1, "There is no significant correlation between academic stress and mental health of secondary school students" is rejected. Hence it has been concluded that academic stress affects the mental health of secondary school students.

Coefficient of Correlation between Academic Stress and Socio-Economic Status of Secondary School Students

Sr.No.	Variables	N	r	Interpretation
1.	Academic Stress	200	0.64	Significant at .05 & .01 level
2.	Socio-Economic Status	200		

The correlation between academic stress and socio-economic status of secondary school students is 0.64. The 'r' in order to be significant at .05 level of significance and .01 level of significance should be .195 and .254 respectively. Since obtained 'r' is much higher than the tabulated values. So it is concluded that there is significant correlation between the academic stress and socio-economic status of secondary school students. Hence hypothesis -"There is no significant correlation between academic stress and socio economic status of secondary school students" is rejected.

Major Findings of the Study

- It has been found that academic stress affects the mental health of secondary school students. Hence, there is significant correlation between academic stress and mental health of secondary Schools students of West- Bengal.
- It has been found that academic stress and socio-economic status were interrelated. Better socio-economic status less the academic stress of secondary school students. Thus, there is significant correlation between academic stress and socio-economic status of secondary school students of West-Bengal

Suggestions for Further Study

1. Only two correlates of academic stress namely mental health and socio-economic status has been taken, it would be desirable to take up more variables.
2. Comparative study of rural and urban area students may also be undertaken.
3. Instead of conducting the research on the secondary school students, representative sample of some other group of students may also be undertaken.

Conclusion

The results of the present paper support the notion that a ground for good mental health includes balance in social relations, in domestic work, in employment as well as in personal economy. This is in line with previous studies, but adds domestic work as one of the key factors both among men and women. In addition, lifestyle factors such as physical inactivity, underweight and risk

consumption of alcohol seem to be associated with mental health symptoms independent of socio-economic factors. It would be valuable to take into account all these areas of life when planning activities to prevent mental health symptoms, highly prevalent in the general population, and when promoting mental health. Furthermore, an individual will be able to better handle psychosocial crisis situations or strain if she/he possesses a wide array of protecting factors.

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