ACADEMIC STRESS AND DEPRESSION AMONG ADOLESCENT STUDENTS OF KASHMIR: AN INVESTIGATION

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Abstract: *The present study was intended to explore the relationship between academic stress and depression among adolescent students of Kashmir. Multistage random sampling technique was used to draw the sample from five districts of Kashmir Division. The sample for the present study comprised of 500 adolescent students studying in various high and higher secondary schools of Kashmir. Data was collected by using Sun et al. (2011) Educational Stress Scale to measure the academic stress of the sample subjects. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient technique was employed for statistical analysis of data. The results of the study revealed that there exists a significant positive relationship between academic stress and depression.*

Key Words: *Adolescent students, academic stress, depression.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

Considered as a period of stress, storm, strife, discord, turmoil, angst, unevenness and paradoxes encompassed by extensive personal transitions, adolescence has been described as a problem age beginning in biology and ending in society (Peterson, 1988). The adolescent is beset by problems of divided loyalties, accentuated by the lack of adult privileges and responsibilities. He thus appears excessively aggressive and then excessively shy, excessively affectionate and then quite suddenly detached and cool. These all are problems of the stresses and strains of transition (Peel, 1956). Adding to this are academic factors that causes further dilemmas. Out of wide range of stressors that adolescent students experience, academic stress has emerged as a predominant source of stress in recent years that affects their overall well-being and performance (Subramani & Kadhiravan, 2017; Pozos-Radillo *et al.,* 2014; Rahardjo, 2014; Glozah, 2013; Persike and Seiffge-Krenke, 2012; Dedeyn, 2008; Kaplan *et al.*, 2005; Sinha, Sharma, & Nepal, 2001; Struthers, Perry & Menec, 2000; Rangaswamy, 1995). Academic stress can be conceptualized as student's struggle between environmental demands related to their academics and ability to cope with such demands. In the academic environment, high expectations, frequency of examinations, information overload, academic burden, high academic demands, worry about future, dissatisfaction with grades, fear of failure, time management problems, unrealistic ambitions, limited opportunities, high competitiveness, peer interaction and student-teacher relations are some of the important sources of stress. Some academic stress is normal for all students as it motivates them to do their best but when stress is perceived negatively or becomes excessive, students may feel caught in a cycle of escalating demands and expectations, largely out of their control giving rise to serious physio-psycho-social health issues and even suicidal thoughts and attempts.

Depression is one of the most frequently diagnosed psychiatric disorders among adolescents. Depression is described by National Institutes of Mental Health (2002) as persistent, sad or anxious mood, feelings of hopelessness or pessimism, guilt, worthlessness, helplessness, poor concentration, low energy and a loss of interest or pleasure in activities that were once enjoyed. Depression can have damaging and negative effects on the physical, social and cognitive functioning of adolescents (Sharma & Pandey, 2017; Abdollahi *et al.*, 2015; Khanam & Bukhari, 2015; Haines, Norris & Kashy, 1996; Kovacs & Goldstone, 1991).

2. OBJECTIVES:

The following objectives were formulated for the present investigation:

i. To study the relationship between academic stress and depression among adolescent students.
ii. To study the relationship between pressure from study factor of academic stress and depression among adolescent students.
iii. To study the relationship between work load factor of academic stress and depression among adolescent students.
iv. To study the relationship between worry about grades factor of academic stress and depression among adolescent students.
v. To study the relationship between self-expectation factor of academic stress and depression among adolescent students.
vi. To study the relationship between despondency factor of academic stress and depression among adolescent

students.

3. HYPOTHESES:

The following hypotheses were formulated for the present investigation:

i. There will be a positive relationship between academic stress and depression among adolescent students.
ii. There will be a positive relationship between pressure from study factor of academic stress and depression among adolescent students.
iii. There will be a positive relationship between work load factor of academic stress and depression among adolescent students.
iv. There will be a positive relationship between worry about grades factor of academic stress and depression among adolescent students.
v. There will be a positive relationship between self-expectation factor of academic stress and depression among adolescent students.
vi. There will be a positive relationship between despondency factor of academic stress and depression among adolescent students.

4. METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURE:

4.1 SAMPLE

The sample for the present study consisted of 500 adolescent students studying in various high and higher secondary schools of Kashmir Division.

4.2 TOOL USED

- Sun, Dunne, Hou, and Xu (2011) Education Stress Scale for Adolescents (ESSA) was administered on the sample subjects to measure their academic stress. This scale measures five factors namely *Pressure from study*, *Worry about grades*, *Despondency*, *Self expectation* and *Workload.* The scale has been used across the world and has adequate psychometric properties.

4.3 STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Data was analysed by using statistical technique of Pearson's product moment correlation.

5. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

In order to achieve the objectives formulated for the present study, the data collected has been tabulated as under.

Table 1.0

Showing Coefficient of correlation between Academic Stress and Depression among Adolescent Students on Composite Score.

Variables	N	Coefficient of correlation	Level of Significance
Academic Stress	500	0.149	Significant at 0.01 level
Depression	500		

The perusal of table 1.0 shows the coefficient of correlation between academic stress and depression among adolescent students. The calculated r-value is reported to be (0.149) which exceeds the tabulated r-value at 0.01 level of significance. From this we reveal that there exists a significant positive relationship between academic stress and depression among adolescent students. The result clarifies that higher the academic stress among adolescent students, higher they will be at the risk of being depressed. Thus from the confirmation of the result, the hypothesis no. 1 which reads as, *"There will be a significant relationship between academic stress and depression among adolescent students",* stands accepted.

Table 1.1

Showing Coefficient of correlation between Factor 'A' (Pressure from Study) of Academic Stress and Depression among Adolescent Students.

Variables	N	Coefficient of correlation	Level of Significance
Pressure From Study	500	0.096	Significant at 0.05 level
Depression	500		

The information presented in the table 1.1 reveals the coefficient of correlation between factor 'A' (*Pressure from study*) of academic stress and depression among adolescent students. The obtained r-value (0.096) exceeds the tabulated r-value at 0.05 level of significance. This shows that there exists a significant positive relationship between

pressure from study factor of academic stress and depression, which implies that greater the pressure a student experience from his/her study, the more he/she will feel sad and depressed. Thus from the confirmation of the result, the hypothesis no. 2 which reads as, *"There will be a significant relationship between pressure from study factor of academic stress and depression among adolescents",* stands accepted.

Table 1.2

Showing Coefficient of correlation between Factor 'B' (Workload) of Academic Stress and Depression among Adolescent Students.

Variables	N	Coefficient of correlation	Level of Significance
Workload	500	0.091	Significant at 0.05 level
Depression	500		

The information presented in the table 1.2 reveals the coefficient of correlation between factor 'B' (*Workload*) of academic stress and depression among adolescent students. The obtained r-value (0.091) exceeds the tabulated r-value at 0.05 level of significance. This shows that there exists a significant positive relationship between workload factor of academic stress and depression, which implies that the high is academic workload, the more depression the adolescent students will experience. Thus, it is clear that anxiety is accelerated by the workload of daily assignments. Thus from the confirmation of the result, the hypothesis no. 3 which reads as, *"There will be a significant relationship between workload factor of academic stress and depression among adolescent students",* stands accepted.

Table 1.3

Showing Coefficient of correlation between factor 'C' (Worry about Grade) of Academic stress and Depression among Adolescent Students.

Variables	N	Coefficient of correlation	Level of Significance
Worry about Grade	500	0.101	Significant at 0.05 level
Depression	500		

The perusal of table 1.3 shows the coefficient of correlation between factor 'C' (*Worry about grade*) of academic stress and depression among adolescent students. The calculated r-value is reported to be (0.101) which exceeds the tabulated r-value at 0.05 level of significance. From this we reveal that there exists a significant positive relationship between worry about grade factor of academic stress and depression among adolescent students. The result clarifies that more the students worry about their grades, the more they will experience depression. Thus from the confirmation of the result, the hypothesis no. 4 which reads as, *"There will be a significant relationship between worry about grade factor of academic stress and depression among adolescent students",* stands accepted.

Table 1.4

Showing coefficient of correlation between factor 'D' (Self-expectation) of Academic stress and Depression among Adolescent Students.

Variables	N	Coefficient of correlation	Level of Significance
Self-Expectation	500	0.105	Significant at 0.05 level
Depression	500		

The results reported in the table 1.4 shows the relationship between factor 'D' (*Self-expectation*) of academic stress and depression among adolescent students. Since the obtained 'r' value (0.105) exceeds the tabulated r-value at 0.05 level of significance, this indicates that there exists a positive significant relationship between self-expectation and depression. Thus it is evident from the above result that self-expectations whether unmet or unrealistic leads to depression. Thus from the confirmation of the result, the hypothesis no. 5 which reads as, *"There will be a significant relationship between self-expectation factor of academic stress and among adolescent students",* stands accepted.

Table 1.5

Showing coefficient of correlation between factor 'E' (Despondency) of Academic Stress and Depression among Adolescent Students.

Variables	N	Coefficient of correlation	Level of Significance
Despondency	500	0.109	Significant at 0.05 level
Depression	500		

The information presented in the table 1.5 depicts the coefficient of correlation between factor 'E' (*Despondency*) of academic stress and depression among adolescent students. The calculated r-value is reported to be (0.109) which exceeds the tabulated r-value at 0.05 level of significance. From this we reveal that there exists a significant positive relationship between despondency factor of academic stress and depression among adolescent students. The result clarifies that despondency among adolescent students leads to depression. Dixon *et al*. (1993) found significant interaction between stress and hopelessness. Their study reveals that hopelessness is strongly related to depression under high level of stressful situations. Thus from the confirmation of the result, the hypothesis no. 6 which reads as, *"There will be a significant relationship between despondency factor of academic stress and depression among adolescent students",* stands accepted.

Thus it is quite evident from the above results that educational stress is a significant contributor to a variety of physical, mental and behavioural disorders among adolescent students. The obtained results are in conformity with the findings of Subramani & Kadhiravan (2017) who in their study revealed that academic stress severely impacts the mental health of students. Fan (2017) in his study concluded that academic stress is a strong predictor for adolescents' levels of depressive and anxiety symptoms and found that academic stress is positively associated with depression and anxiety symptoms among adolescents. Niamh (2016) found strong positive relationship present between academic stress and depression and revealed that the students who had higher levels of perceived academic pressure, scored higher on depression and anxiety. Jayanthi, Thirunavukarasu & Rajkumar (2015) found that adolescents with academic stress are at higher risk of depression than adolescents without academic stress. Sun *et al.* (2012) revealed that excessive amount of academic stress or educational stress may lead to severe psychological symptoms, such as depressed mood, anxious feelings and even suicidal thoughts and acts when coping recourses are exhausted. Another study conducted by Kausar (2010) showed that academic workload emerged as significant predictor of stress among students. The students who had been overloaded with academic work in terms of time spent in classes, in labs, working on assignments felt more stress. An excessive academic workload is one of the leading causes of depression among students. Yeung and Wong (2009) results indicate that academic stress is a risk factor that heightened student anxiety levels. Dixon and Kurpius (2008) reported that academic stress had a strong association with depressive behaviours and that this relationship had an effect on suicidal ideation. Rafael (2008) study indicated that perceived burdens related to studying are positively associated with higher depression among students. Zheng, Wan & Li (2001) concluded that the high academic could increase sadness, depression and anxiety among students. Ross, Neibling & Heckert (1999) found that increased workload is one of the major sources of stress experienced by students. Ystgaard (1997) study also found significant relationship between academic stress and psychological distress. Fisher (1994) found positive association between academic stress, depression, and physical illness. Verma and Gupta (1990) reported that academic stress has a detrimental impact on students' emotional states during their daily activities, and causes variety of somatic symptoms. Another study conducted by Aldwin and Greenberger (1987) revealed that that perceived academic stress is related to anxiety and despair among students.

6. MAJOR FINDINGS:

- It has been found that there exists positive significant relationship between academic stress and depression on composite score.
- Significant and positive relationship has been found between pressure from study factor of academic stress and depression.
- Significant positive correlation has been found between workload factor of academic stress and depression.
- Significant positive association has been found between worry about grade factor of academic stress and depression.
- Significant positive relationship has been found between self-expectation factor of academic stress and depression.
- Significant positive correlation has been found between despondency factor of academic stress and depression.

7. CONCLUSION:

Thus it is quite obvious from the findings of the present study that academic stress is consistently the strongest risk factor causing physical and psychological impairment among adolescents. The results indicated that there exists a significant positive correlation between academic stress and depression. Thus academic stress has an adverse impact on the physio-psycho-socio health and performance ability of students. The results of the present study may prove a precautionary guideline for those who overburden students with intense academic workload, or set high or unrealistic academic demands, inimical to the overall well-being of students. The findings of this study emphasized the need for strategic interventions (guidance and counselling programmes, coping skills programmes) focusing on reducing academic stressors and depression among students and improving their performance.

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