



A STUDY ON ACADEMIC STRESS AMONG INTERMEDIATE STUDENTS

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Introduction

Academic stress has emerged as a major concern in contemporary education, particularly among students who are striving to meet increasing scholastic expectations. It is commonly understood as the mental and emotional pressure experienced by students when they perceive academic demands as challenging or overwhelming. Such stress may arise from examinations, heavy workloads, competition among peers, parental expectations, and uncertainty regarding future educational and career opportunities (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Intermediate students are especially susceptible to academic stress because this stage represents a critical transition between secondary education and higher education. At this level, students are required to make important academic decisions while simultaneously coping with the developmental changes associated with adolescence. The pressure to secure high marks, prepare for competitive examinations, and fulfill family aspirations often creates a stressful learning environment. When stress exceeds a student's coping capacity, it may adversely affect concentration, motivation, self-confidence, and overall academic performance (Misra & McKean, 2000).

Although a moderate level of stress can motivate students to work harder, excessive academic stress may have harmful consequences on their physical and psychological well-being. It can lead to anxiety, sleep disturbances, irritability, emotional instability, and reduced interest in studies. Prolonged stress may also hinder healthy personality development and affect students' social relationships (Pascoe, Hetrick, & Parker, 2020).

In the Indian educational context, intermediate students often experience intense academic pressure due to board examinations, competitive entrance tests, and societal emphasis on academic achievement. Therefore, it is essential to understand the nature and extent of academic stress among intermediate students. Such understanding can help educators, parents, and counsellors develop supportive strategies that promote students' academic success as well as their emotional well-being. The present study, therefore, seeks to examine the level of

academic stress among intermediate students and analyze its variation with respect to selected demographic variables.

Need of the Study

Academic stress has become an important concern in the educational life of intermediate students due to increasing academic demands and competition. At the intermediate level, students face pressure from examinations, heavy syllabus, parental expectations, and uncertainty regarding higher education and career choices. Excessive academic stress may negatively affect students' concentration, motivation, emotional stability, and academic performance.

Intermediate students are in a crucial stage of adolescence, where they require proper guidance and support to cope with academic challenges. Understanding the level and sources of academic stress is essential for identifying students who may be at risk of psychological and educational difficulties. The findings of such a study can help teachers, parents, and counsellors develop effective strategies for stress management and create a supportive learning environment.

Therefore, the present study is needed to examine the academic stress among intermediate students and to provide useful insights for improving their academic achievement and overall well-being.

Review of literature

Ghosh (2016) studied academic stress among high school students and found that private school students experienced significantly higher academic stress than government school students. The study also reported higher stress levels among female students, indicating the influence of school type and gender on academic stress.

Kadapatti (2017) examined the prevalence of academic stress among pre-university students and found that many students experienced moderate to high levels of academic stress. The study also reported higher stress among female, urban, and second-year students, emphasizing the need for appropriate stress-management interventions.

Ravi sadda (2018) reported that male intermediate students experienced higher academic stress compared to female students. The study further indicated that students studying in urban colleges experienced more academic stress than students from rural colleges.

Poonam and Dixit (2019) observed that most adolescent students experienced mild academic stress and adopted moderate coping strategies. The study concluded that academic stress, coping strategies, and selected demographic variables were not significantly associated.

Chandan K. P. and Shivappa R. (2020) reviewed academic stress among higher secondary students and identified academic difficulties, poor coping with studies, family concerns, peer pressure, and inadequate parental and teacher support as major causes of stress.

Aswartha Reddy A. and Lalitha K. (2021) revealed that academic stress was comparatively higher among male adolescents than female adolescents. The study also indicated that students studying in corporate colleges experienced greater academic stress than those in government colleges.

Operational Definitions of the Study

- **Academic stress** is operationally defined as the stress experienced by students in relation to academic activities and responsibilities, as measured by the Academic Stress Scale developed by R. Balaji Rao (2012). The total score obtained on the scale represents the respondent's level of academic stress.
- **Intermediate Students**

Intermediate students refer to those learners who are enrolled in the first year and second year of Intermediate education (Classes XI and XII) in recognized junior colleges. In the present study, the term includes students studying in selected intermediate colleges of the specified study area.

Limitations of the Present Study

The present study was confined to a limited geographical area, focusing exclusively on **Guntur District of Andhra Pradesh**. The investigation was restricted to selected recognized junior colleges within the district. The sample size was limited to **250 intermediate students**, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to students in other districts or regions. Furthermore, the study examined only the variable of Academic Stress and its relationship with selected demographic variables. The statistical analysis and interpretation of results were carried out at the **0.05 and 0.01 levels of significance**, which may influence the conclusions drawn within the specified confidence limits.

Objectives of the Study

- To assess the overall level of academic stress among intermediate students.
- To examine whether academic stress differs between male and female intermediate students.
- To investigate the difference in academic stress between rural and urban intermediate students.
- To determine whether academic stress varies between students studying in Government and Private junior colleges.
- To examine the difference in academic stress between Arts and Science intermediate students.

Null Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the academic stress of male and female intermediate students.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the academic stress of rural and urban intermediate students.

H₀₃: There is no significant difference in the academic stress of students studying in Government and Private junior colleges.

H₀₄: There is no significant difference in the academic stress of Arts and Science intermediate students.

Methodology of the Study

The present study employed the **survey method** of research. The survey method is considered appropriate for collecting information from a large group of respondents regarding their characteristics, attitudes, and behaviours. It is widely used in educational research to study psychological variables such as academic stress.

Population of the Study

The population of the present study consisted of all Intermediate First-Year and Second-Year students studying in recognized junior colleges of Guntur District, Andhra Pradesh, during the academic year **2020–2021**.

Sample of the Study

A representative sample of intermediate students was drawn from the population during the academic year **2020–2021** using an appropriate sampling technique. The sample included students from different demographic backgrounds to ensure adequate representation of the population.

Sampling Technique

The study adopted **Stratified random sampling** for the selection of respondents from the chosen colleges.

Variables of the Study

- **Dependent Variable:** Academic Stress
- **Independent Variables:** Gender, locality, type of management, and academic stream of the student.

Tool Used for the Study

Academic Stress Scale (R. Balaji Rao, 2013)

Academic stress was assessed using the **Academic Stress Scale developed by R. Balaji Rao (2013)**. The scale consists of **40 items** with five response options: *No Stress*, *Slight Stress*, *Moderate Stress*, *High Stress*, and *Extreme Stress*. Scores range from **40 to 200**, with higher scores indicating higher academic stress. The scale possesses **content validity established by expert evaluation** and demonstrated **reliability (Karl Pearson correlation coefficient, $r = 0.81$)**.

Statistical Techniques Used

The collected data were analysed using appropriate statistical techniques such as:

- Mean
- Standard Deviation
- t-test
- These statistical measures were used to examine the stress coping ability of intermediate students and to determine whether significant differences existed among various groups.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Table-1

Gender-wise Comparison of Academic Stress Among Intermediate Students

Gender	N	Mean	SD	Calculated t-value
Male	250	105.48	13.67	1.28 @
Female	250	106.96	12.24	

@ Not Significant at 0.05 level

Table 1 indicate that the mean academic stress scores of male and female intermediate students are **105.48** and **106.96**, respectively. The calculated **t-value (1.28)** is not statistically significant at the **0.05 level of significance**. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted. Hence,

it is concluded that there is no significant difference in the academic stress between male and female intermediate students.

Table -2
Locality-wise Comparison of Academic Stress Among Intermediate Students

Locality	N	Mean	SD	Calculated t-value
Rural	250	108.23	14.31	3.53**
Urban	250	112.67	13.75	

* *Significant at 0.05 level

Table 2 show that the mean academic stress scores of rural and urban intermediate students are **108.23 and 112.67**, respectively. The higher mean score of urban students indicates that they experience greater academic stress than rural students. The calculated **t-value (3.53)** is statistically significant at the **0.01 level of significance**. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. It is concluded that there is a significant difference in the academic stress between rural and urban intermediate students.

Table -3
Management -wise Comparison of Academic Stress Among Intermediate Students

Management	N	Mean	SD	Calculated t-value
Government	250	110.61	14.26	4.88 **
Private	250	116.74	13.78	

** Significant at 0.01 level

Table 3 reveal that the mean academic stress scores of Government and Private intermediate students are **110.61 and 116.74**, respectively. The higher mean score of Private students indicates comparatively greater academic stress than government school students . The calculated **t-value (4.88)** is statistically significant at the **0.01 level of significance**. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. It is concluded that there is a significant difference in the academic stress between Government and Private intermediate students.

Table -4
Academic Stream -wise Comparison of Academic Stress Among Intermediate Students

Academic Stream	N	Mean	SD	Calculated t-value
Arts	250	111.92	12.87	3.22 **
Science	250	115.73	13.55	

** Significant at 0.01 level

Table 4 indicates that the mean academic stress scores of Arts and Science intermediate students are 111.92 and 115.73, respectively. The higher mean score obtained by Science students signifies comparatively greater academic stress than arts students. The calculated **t-value (3.22)** is statistically significant at the **0.01 level of significance**. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. It is inferred that there is a significant difference in the academic stress between Arts and Science intermediate students.

Findings of the Study

- Academic stress was found to be **similar among male and female intermediate students**, as no significant gender difference was observed.
- **Urban intermediate students** experienced **higher academic stress** than rural intermediate students, and the difference was statistically significant.
- **Private college students** reported **greater academic stress** than Government college students, indicating a significant difference based on the type of institution.
- **Science students** experienced **higher academic stress** than Arts students, showing a significant difference across academic streams.

Educational Implications

- Students should be encouraged to develop effective study habits, time management skills, and healthy coping strategies to reduce academic stress.
- Teachers should identify students experiencing academic stress at an early stage and provide timely academic guidance, encouragement, and emotional support.
- Teachers should adopt learner-centred teaching methods and balanced assessment practices to create a supportive and less stressful learning environment.
- Parents should maintain realistic academic expectations, provide emotional support, and avoid placing excessive pressure on students regarding academic performance.
- Educational institutions should strengthen counselling services and organize regular stress management, life skills, and mental health awareness programmes for students.
- Special attention should be given to urban, private, and Science stream students by providing targeted counselling and academic support, as these groups experience comparatively higher academic stress.
- Educational administrators should promote student-friendly academic policies, balanced workloads, and supportive learning environments that enhance both academic achievement and psychological well-being.
- Educational policymakers should integrate mental health education, counselling services, and student wellness programmes into the higher secondary education system to foster holistic student development.

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