Impact of Stream and Social Support on Academic Stress among Secondary School Students

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Abstract

The present study investigated the impact of the stream and social support on academic stress among secondary school students. A random sample from government schools affiliated to PSEB located in Punjab State. Scale for Assessing Academic Stress (SAAS) by Sinha et al. (2001) and Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) Zimet et al. (1988) were used for data collection. The results of the study revealed that secondary school students of science and commerce stream perceived significantly higher academic stress as compared to secondary school students of the arts stream. However, no significant difference was found in the academic stress of science and commerce streams. Correlational results found that social support was negatively correlated with the academic stress of secondary school students. Implications of these results are discussed.

Keywords: Academic Stress, Social Support, Secondary School Students

Introduction

Stress is any situation or event that evokes a negative feeling in a person. During the 18th and the 19th century, the meaning of stress shifted to donate a force, pressure or strong influence acting on a physical object or person with these forces and attempt to maintain its original state. The term stress often refers to a situation that causes people to react in a particular way. Stress is generally defined as the body's common reply or response to demands made on it, or to distressing events in the environment (Rosenham and Seligman, 1989). The general characteristics of the person in distress are, tense, unable to relax, easily upset, irritable, nervy, jumpy, intolerant of interruption or delay (Neeta and Singh, 2020).

Archer and Lamnin (1985) indicated academic stress as a stress arrived from very important factors like writing terms papers, text anxiety, poor study skill, excessive academic load and classroom environment, which is the turn forms a major part of general stress in adolescent students. Academic stress essentially relates to mental distress associated with some anticipated frustration on account it of academic failure or even realization of the possibility of such a failure (Gupta and Khan, 1987). Fireman (1992) explained academic stress is anything that imposes an extra demand on a person's ability to cope, often with something that is new and different in the academic world. Bisht (1989) examined that academic stress shows the perception of a student's academic frustration, academic conflict, academic pressure and academic anxiety. It is an important factor accounting for variation in academic achievement. Academic stress is conceptualized as an interaction between a student's environment, stressors,

cognitive appraisal and coping with physiological and psychological response to stress and stresses related to academics.

Academic stress harmfully affects students' personal, physical and emotional well-being as well as their academic achievement levels (Rentala et., 2021). Students suffer from stress as they have to memorize massive content in a very little amount of time (Khan, 2019). Academic stress is particularly high in the learners who are incapable of keeping the balance between their friends, family, social and academic activities in life (Porwal and Kumar, 2014). Academic problems like disinterest in joining classes, examination stress, relating academic capability with other students, failure to understand the subject and trying to meet parents' expectations (Vathi and Malathi, 2018). Academic stress occurs when learners face a difference between demands and resources.

Social support is defined as the nearness and availability of people on whom we can depend on, who let us realize that they think about esteem and respect us. Zysbery and Zisberg, (2022) defined social support as the extent to which individuals recognize others around them are accessible to them and are focused to their needs. Social support alludes to the perceived helpful, appreciated, comfort or assistance of an individual who was obtained by another person or group (Abdullah and Singh, 2019). On the other hand, In fact, social support is defined as the process "through which the communal relations promote well-being and health" (Cohen et al. 2000) and an agent that buffers against life stressors (Dollete, 2004).

Cobb (1976) asserted social support is a social resource, social assert or social network which can be used by individuals when they are in need of advice, help, approval, assistance, protection or backing. It is an exchange of resources between at least two individuals and perceived by the provider or the recipient to be intended to enhance the well-being of the recipient (Shumaker and Brownell, 1984). Social support is the existence or availability of people on whom we can rely people who let us know that they care about value and love us (Sarason et al.,1983). Gariepy et al. (2016) described those parents, teachers and families were source of support that was most consistently found to be protective against depression in adolescents, children and youngers.

Social support may be especially important in buffering stressors because students experience an array of stressors in an academic and personal domain (Marhamah and Hamzah, 2016). Social support is very important for an individual in their life and also has been recognized to have a significant impact on the achievement of students (Yasin and Dzulkifli, 2010). Social support represents different characteristics, containing emotional support (receiving warmth and compassion from others), informational provision (receiving information or strategies that will help one cope with situational demands), and practical aspects (receiving tangible or material aid) (Laslo-Roth et al., 2022). Lack of social support has been found to be one of the factors that lead to many psychological problems among students. Support from family, friends and teachers can reduce the impact of psychological problems. Social support could help the students/learners to reduce the burden of academic workload and cope with daily life stressors. Social support is a coping device for stress (Park et al., 2015). Social support is

operationalized in research using groupings of emotional, instrumental, informational, and less frequently, appraisal support (Wachter et al., 2021).

Significance of the study

In the present study the aim was to find out the impact of the stream and social support on academic stress among secondary school students. In the present competitive world, students deal with different issues related to academic stress, including test pressure, lack of engagement in going to classes and powerlessness to understand the subject. Academic stress is the feeling of worry about one's academic exercises. It can prompt the students not to be able to perform as well as could be expected in assessments. The academic stress of school students occurs when students experience academic problems and frustrations or problems faced at school. Academic stress is a concern that must not be taken for granted because it adversely affects the overall adjustment of students.

Social support seems to be assistance for students to cope with stress. Students who have a higher level of social support may feel better academic adjustment because they believe that friends, classmates, family members, colleagues and professors are available to help them in completing the academic tasks (Hamzah and Marhamah, 2015). Support received by the students either from family or friends can contribute to academic performance and reduce academic stress at the school or college. It is indeed important to realize that a student's performance in academic performance is determined not by academic-related matters but also by the social support that they get from people around them. The lack of social support affects the emergence of academic stress not only impedes academic performance but also adversely affects the overall adjustment of students.

This study will produce some important result that implies education. The essence of the research finding will be the understanding of the impact of stream and social support on academic stress which are thought to be responsible for mature and balanced personality of an adolescence that significantly contribute to one's success in life.

Objectives of the study

1. To study the stream-wise differences in academic stress among secondary school students.
2. To study the relationship of academic stress and social support among secondary school students.

Hypotheses of the study

1. There is no significant stream-wise difference in academic stress among secondary school students.
2. There is no significant relationship between academic stress and social support among secondary school students.

Method

The study was conducted through quantitative descriptive method of research.

Sample

The population of the study was secondary school students of 11th class studying in government secondary schools located in District Shri Muktsar Sahib of Punjab State,

A sample stratified random sample of 250 secondary school students was selected from 4 secondary schools affiliated to Punjab School Education Board, Sahibzada Ajit Singh Nagar by giving due weightage to stream of the study (110 Arts, 70 Science and 70 Commerce).

Research Tools Used

In the present study researcher used the following tools

- **Scale For Assessing Academic Stress (SAAS)**: Scale for assessing academic stress developed by Sinha et al. (2001) was employed to assess the academic stress of secondary school students. This scale consist a 30 self-report items having yes or no response. Yes shows presence of academic stress and no shows absence academic stress.

- **Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS)**: Multidimensional scale of perceived social support (MSPSS) developed by Zimet et al. (1988) was employed to assess the perceived social support of secondary school students the scale contains 10 items which has 7 point responses. Very strongly disagree= 1, Strongly disagree= 2, Mildly disagree= 3, Natural= 4, Mildly agree= 5, Strongly agree= 6 and Very strongly agree= 7.

Results and Discussion

In order to meet the objectives of the study one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and person product moment correlation statistical techniques were used.

Stream-Wise Differences in Academic Stress Among Secondary School Students

The table 1 shows the stream-wise means and SDs of academic stress among secondary school students.

Table 1

Means and SDs of Academic Stress among Secondary School Students

Stream	N	Mean	SD
Arts	110	12.46	3.12
Science	70	13.90	4.13
Commerce	70	14.25	4.26
Total	250	13.82	3.83

The perusal of the table 1 shows that mean of academic stress among secondary school students pursuing arts, science and commerce stream of the study came out to be 12.46, 13.90 and 14.25 with the SDs of 3.12, 4.13 and 4.26 respectively.

The table 2 shows summary of analysis of variance (ANOVA), stream-wise differences in academic stress among secondary school students.

Table 2
Summary of Analysis of Variance (ANOVA): Stream-wise Differences in Academic Stress among Secondary School Students

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Squares	F
Between Group	165.118	2	82.56	
Within Group	3485.026	247	14.10	5.85*
Total	3650.144	249		

*$p \leq 0.05$

The table 2 reveals the F-value for the main effect of stream of study on academic stress among secondary school students came out to be 5.85 which is significant at 0.05 levels. It shows that there are significant stream-wise differences in academic stress among secondary school students.

The table 3 reveals the results of post-hoc analysis of stream-wise differences in academic stress among secondary school students.

Table 3
Post-hoc Analysis for Stream-wise Differences in Academic Stress among Secondary School Students

Stream	Arts	Science	Commerce
Arts	--	2.65**	3.25**
Science		--	0.50[NS]
Commerce			--

**$p \leq 0.01$, NS= Not Significant

The table 3 shows the results of post-hoc analysis of stream-wise differences in academic stress among secondary school students. The table 3 shows that the t-value testing the significance of mean difference of arts and science stream of secondary school students came out to be 2.65 which is significant at 0.01 levels. The table 3 also indicates that t-value of arts and commerce secondary school students came out to be 3.25 which is also significant at 0.01 levels. The table 3 also indicates that t-value of science and commerce secondary school students came out to be 0.50 which is not significant at 0.05 levels. It may be concluded that secondary school students of science and commerce stream possesses significantly higher academic stress as compare to secondary school students of arts stream, These results of the study are in line with the researches of Vathi & Malathi (2018), Sonali (2018), Tiwari (2020), Rentala et al. (2021) and Thangavel (2021). Moreover, no significant difference found in academic stress of secondary school students of science and commerce streams. This result of the study is supported by a study of Sagar and Bijender (2017). Hence the 1st hypothesis '*There will be no significant stream-wise differences in academic stress among secondary school students*" is rejected.

Academic Stress in Relation to Social Support among Secondary School Students

The table 4 shows the correlation of the academic stress and social support among secondary school students.

Table 4
Academic Stress in Relation to Social Support among Secondary School Students

Variable	N	r	Sign
Social Support	250	-0.49**	Significant
Academic Stress			

**p≤0.01

The table 4 shows that the value of correlation co-efficient between academic stress and social support came out to be -0.49, which is significant at 0.01 levels. It indicates that there is significant and negative relationship between academic stress and social support of secondary school students Reetinder (2007) Alavijeh et al. (2017), Wenjun (2018), Bhargav and Tiwari (2020), Dewi and Muslikah (2021), and McLean et al. (2023). Hence, the 2nd hypothesis: "*There will be no significant relationship between academic stress and social support among secondary school students*" is rejected.

Implications

- Results suggested that students of the commerce stream faced academic stress more than students of the arts and science streams. So meditation, yoga (Kauts and Sharma, 2009), karate, kung fu etc, are being introduced to them which can play an important role in keeping the academic stress level down and can improve the concentration power of the students.

- Parents and teachers should concentrate on reducing the academic stress by providing the social support to students.

- Teachers should provide guidance to the students regarding the strategies which can help them to reduce the academic stress level and promote their academic achievements.

- Taking regular short breaks from academic works helps the individuals to relax and concentrate for longer which can help the individuals to control and reduce the academic stress.

- School administrators should create a stress free environment and arrange necessary environmental conditions in schools, so that academic stress can reduce and does not affect the academic achievement of the students.

- Parents and teachers should help the students to develop and improve strategies for surviving from academic stress whenever they face it.

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