



ISSN Print: 2394-7500
ISSN Online: 2394-5869
Impact Factor: 5.2
IJAR 2015; 1(11): 394-396
www.allresearchjournal.com
Received: 12-08-2015
Accepted: 13-09-2015

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Academic stress among adolescents in relation to gender

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Abstract

According to Stanley Hall Adolescence is a period of Stress and Storm. The main aim of this study is to find out the level of stress among adolescent learners. A numbers of adolescents are suffering from mental health related problems because of stress. The present study was conducted to examine Academic Stress among Adolescents in relation to Gender. The population of the present study consisted of class X th students of public schools of Rohtak city affiliated to C.B.S.E. only. Four schools were selected randomly and from each school about 53 students were also selected randomly. Stress Inventory for School Students (S.I.S.S) by Singh & Rani was used to collect the data. For statistical analysis, t. test was used to study the significant difference among different groups. Results of the present study indicate that, there is significant difference between academic stress of male and female adolescents. Female subjects were found to be under more academic stress as compared to their male counterparts.

Keywords: Academic Stress, Adolescents, Gender.

Introduction

The modern world, which is said to be a world of achievement, is also a world of stress. One finds stress everywhere; whether it is within the family, business organization or any other social or economic activity. Stress is physiological and psychological imbalance. It arises due to the demands on a person and that person's inability to meet those demands. Academic Stress in the students can be very taxing for the parents and the students themselves. Stress has been tightening its grip on the students, as they have to compete at every step of their academic career in this fast moving world. Adolescence has been described as a period of storm and stress (Hall, 1904) ^[9] and as one of the most difficult periods in life due to abrupt changes. These not only concern bodily changes and resurfacing of libido, but also include other psychological changes (e.g., regarding personality/identity development, personal values, commitments and expectations, and emerging desires for autonomy and independence) and social changes (e.g., regarding role ambiguity (child vs. adult), influence of peer-group, and sexual relationships), which can factor into the emergence of parental conflicts, mood disruptions, and risk behavior (Rosenberg, 1972; Arnett, 1999; Marcia, 2006) ^[18, 3, 14.] Academic stress is a mental distress with respect to some anticipated frustration associated with academic failure or even an awareness of possibility of such failure (Gupta and Khan, 1987) ^[8]. Stress in family like divorce, intrapersonal conflicts and maternal depression leads to stress in the adolescents which deteriorates functioning (Rex Forehand *et al*, 1991) ^[17]. Schafer (1996) Observed that the most irritating daily hassles were usually school-related stressors such as constant pressure of studying, too little time, writing term papers, taking tests, future plans and boring instructor. Youth today are living in an increasingly anxiety ridden atmosphere (Nalini, 1997). A person whether a child, adult, man, woman, employed or unemployed everyone is facing stress in his/her own way. It is the human nature to face the challenges boldly or to escape from it. All this varies from person to person. Any challenge that exceeds the coping abilities of the individual becomes stress. Rapid global change is altering the experience of adolescents, presenting new opportunities and challenges to young people's health and well-being. Adolescents' experiences around the world may differ depending upon their gender, family, schools and peers. (Brown & Larson, 2002, Larson & Wilson, 2004) ^[6]. In this world of cut throat competition the students are

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themselves anxions about their career and future. When they fail to cope up with the situation or fail to satisfy their needs then it results into stress and depression. Academic stress refers to the unpleasant psychological situations that occur due to the educational expectations from parents, teachers, peers and family members, pressure of parents for academic achievement, present educational and examination system, burden of Homework etc. Academic Stress among students have long been researched on, and researchers have identified stressors as too many assignments, competitions with other students, failures and poor relationships with other students or lengthy lecturers. Academic problems have been reported to be the most common source of stress for students. Students experience academic stress arising from both their own expectations to excel as well as expectations arising from their parents and teachers (Ang and Huan, 2006) [2]. At the root of this turbulence is the enormous number of major changes that take place during this time and the effects that they have on various areas of life (Bremberg, 2006; Nounopoulos, Ashby, & Gilman, 2006) [5, 13]. Academic stress is the product of a combination of academic related demands that exceed the adaptive resources available to an individual (Wilks, 2008) [22]. Students live in a world where nothing seems to be guaranteed with certainty and at the same time are expected to perform at every front, the main being academics (Bhansali & Trivedi, 2008) [4]. Adolescence is the most important period in human life. Today, every learner has to face many competitions at different stages of his life. Participation in these competitions augments academic stress in our life. Stress is an unavoidable consequence of modern living. With the growth of industries, pressure in the urban areas, quantitative growth in population and various problems in day –today life are some of the reasons which trigger stress. Stress is a condition of strain that has a direct bearing on emotions, thought process and physical conditions of a person. Stress in our society is not something that is invisible. Changes driven by technological opportunities have a huge impact on economy, community as well as on families. We have rocketed into a new way of life, and these changes have had powerful effects on the experience of growing up. Today’s children are in a very difficult situation than their parents or grandparents. The present world is the world of achievements but also a world of stress, and has therefore rightly been called the “Age of Anxiety and Stress” (Pestonjee, 2009) [15]. Considering the extensiveness and impact of these changes, it is understandable that adolescence can be a stressful period of a child’s life. In recognizing the turbulence of adolescence, there is, however, a risk that these stress-related problems could be regarded as an inescapable norm – rather than as an indication that adolescents need help and support. Recent nationwide surveys in Sweden indicate that there have been dramatic increases in stress and serious stress-related health problems among Swedish adolescents (Hagquist, 2009;

Socialstyrelsen, 2009) [10, 21]. Academic stress is caused due to the examination system, burden of homework and attitudes of parents and teachers. We are a generation where everybody lives breaths and eats competition, where they are constantly encouraged to compare themselves with peer groups. Parental pressure is also responsible to create stress as the emphasis is not given to acquire knowledge but to excel. Some parents intend to compensate through their children. When the adolescents are unable to meet their parent’s expectations, they feel mental stress, frustration, aggression, rejection, depression which may lead to undesirable behaviors including suicide. Statistics from the National Crime records Bureau (NCRM) report has revealed that West Bengal has for the third consecutive year earned the dubious distinction of being the state with the largest number of students committing suicide. The state is however ill-prepared to tackle this menace (Dasgupta, 2010). It is under such a backdrop that the objective of the present study was set to understand the relationship between Academic stress and Gender of the adolescents.

Objectives of the study

1. To study the academic stress of male and female adolescents.
2. To compare the academic stress of male and female adolescents.

Hypotheses of the study

H₀₁ There is no significant difference between academic stress of male and female adolescents.

Research methodology

Descriptive survey method has been used in the present study. Two hundred twelve students of class X were included in the present study. List of the schools located in Rohtak District was obtained from CBSE office Delhi site. Out of these schools four schools were chosen randomly. A random sample of 212 adolescents studying in standard X of four schools affiliated to CBSE was taken in the present study. 123 male and 89 female were included in the research. Consent of school principals and participants was taken before conducting the study.

Tools used

Stress Inventory for School Students (S.I.S.S) by Singh & Rani was used to measure academic stress among adolescents.

Analysis and interpretation

To attain the objective of the study and to verify the formulated hypotheses the data were analyzed. To meet out the purpose of the study mean, SD were calculated. 't' value was calculated to test the significant difference between the means of the groups.

Table 1: Means, SDs and 't' value of academic stress of male and female adolescents.

Variable	Group	NO. of student	Mean	S.D	df	t.value	Level of significance
Gender	Male	123	104.260	18.985	210	2.239	Significant
	Female	89	110.247	19.536			

Table No.1 indicates that the Mean score of male adolescents is 104.260 whereas mean score of female adolescents is 110.247. The calculated 't' value comes out to be 2.239. When compared with table value, it indicates that the

calculated value is higher than the table value 1.97 with d.f 210. So the mean difference is significant. Therefore the stated null hypothesis that, there exists no significant difference between academic stress of male and female

adolescents is rejected. It may be concluded that significant difference has been found between academic stress of male and female adolescents. Female subjects were found to be under more academic stress as compared to their male counterparts.

Discussion and Conclusions

It is evident from the analysis that a significant difference has been found between male and female adolescents on academic stress. The female adolescents are found to be under more academic stress than male adolescents. This may be due to the fact that females are sensitive & sincere by nature and take everything very seriously whereas males are generally easy going and happy go lucky. Consequently, females have been found to have more academic stress than their male counterparts. Since the female adolescents are found to be under more academic stress than male students so efforts should be made to manage their academic stress and help them cope with stressors. Thus, academic frustration, academic conflict, academic pressure and academic anxiety should be minimized which can reduce the academic stress. If the level of academic stress reduces, the mental well-being among adolescents will increase. The findings of the present study have important implications not only for students and their family members but also for those who play more assertive role in the education of adolescents i.e. teachers, counselors, and researchers. To reduce the academic stress schools should use different strategies to overcome this. Thus, it is the duty of family and schools to provide stress free and congenial environment to students for their academic growth and well-being. School authorities and teachers may keep in mind that the students are not overloaded with work as it may negatively affect their efficiency. The ideas of students should also be taken into consideration while framing curriculum. Students should also be given enough freedom to incorporate their innovative ideas to make classroom teaching interesting. It should be ensured that students should be provided with the environment and facilities conducive to their abilities and interest which can be helpful in the development of divergent thinking. All this can be easily done if teachers, parents as well as the children themselves join hands & beat the stress.

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