

## STRESSORS OF ACADEMIC STRESS - A STUDY ON PRE-UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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### ABSTRACT

Academic stress among college students has been a topic of interest for many years. College students experience high stress due to various stressors. When stress is perceived negatively or becomes excessive, it can affect both health and academic performance. The study was conducted to know the stressors of academic stress among pre-university students. The sample consisted of 360 pre-university students of both boys and girls drawn using random sampling method from four co-educational colleges. Study Habits Schedule was developed by combining relevant items selected from the Study involvement inventory development and study problems schedule developed by combining relevant items from student problems and adjustment inventory developed and student personal problems developed were the scales used to collect the data from students. The results showed that high aspiration, poor study habits, more study problems, change in medium of instruction and low socio-economic conditions are the factors responsible for to academic stress and become stressors for stress among selected respondents

**KEYWORDS:** Academic stress, college students, adolescent, socio-economic factors

According to the American College Health Association 2006 survey of college students, the one greatest health obstacle to college students' academic performance was academic stress. Of the 97,357 college students who participated in the survey, 32 percent reported that academic stress had resulted in an incomplete i.e. a dropped course or a lower grade. Academic stress can be the ultimate career stopper. The key to avoid becoming a drop-out, as a result of academic stress, is to identify its source. These sources are known as stressors or factors which lead to academic stress.

Academic stress is a mental distress with respect to some apprehended frustration associated with academic failure, apprehension of such failure or even an awareness of the possibility of such failure (Gupta and Khan, 1987). In the context of school, academic stress means a pervasive sense of urgency to learn all these things which are related to or prescribed by the school (Shah, 1988). Academic stress is the product of a combination of academic-related demands that exceed the adaptive resources available to an individual.

It is widely acknowledged that a students academic achievement and academic ability depend on both internal and external factors such as proper study habits, intelligence, educational aspirations of self and parents, medium of instruction and so on. If these situations are not conducive for learning. They may lead to academic stress.

Several authors have studied the academic stress of different age group. Zeidner (1992) study reported that students appeared to be under high by pressure originating from course overload and academic evaluation procedures and least stressed by personal familiar and social factors. Clift and Thomas (1983) reported that course work assignment was a major source often keeping the students under continual examination puts to stress. Kohlon's (1983) study revealed that lack of parental help, congenial examination system, living up to parental expectation, attitude of the teachers and fear of examination were the stress causing factors. Berg and Keinan's (1986) also found that imposing excessively high self expectation was the most trouble stressor leading to academic stress. Shirom's (1986) study revealed that examination related stresses were found to be causing high stress followed by class room assignment overload.

For academic excellence as well as taking advantage of future opportunities that come in the way of one's life, learning is important as it assumes great importance at 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> standard which it is the terminal stage in setting the stage for one's academic career.

It is seen from Banerjee's report (2001) that every year about 25,000 students in the age group of 18 to 20 years commit suicide during the examination month (i.e. March to June). This is substantiated with District Central Records Bureau of Dharwad that every year at least 4-5 students

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committed suicide. It was also seen from the II year pre-university examination (PUC) results of 2001 that out of 3,94,200 students who appeared for exam, only 1,54,840 that is 39.28% were successful, 7% less than previous year's performance. This trend is alarming and may account for a lot of wastage of human resources. There is a need to understand the problems of the students who appear in the PUC examination. Therefore, the study was taken up to identify stressors that lead to academic stress among pre-university students with the following objectives.

1. To study the aspiration level, study habits, study problems and academic stress of PUC I and II year students of Science, Arts and Commerce.
2. To know the influence of socio-economic variables, aspiration, study habit and study problems on academic stress.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

Differential design was employed to know the sources of academic stress of first and second year PUC male and female students of science, commerce and arts faculty.

### Population and Sample

The sample of the study consisting of 360 male and female students studying in PUC I and II year was drawn from four co-educational colleges of Dharwad city. There were totally 12 colleges. Seven colleges were imparting primary to PUC education. Among these seven colleges two were women's colleges, the rest were co-educational colleges. There were ten colleges offering courses of all three faculties (Science, Commerce and Arts), two colleges with PUC and three were with PUC and degree courses. So, two colleges were selected randomly from the two categories of institution. Thus four co-educational colleges were selected.

### Tools Used

#### 1. Stress Event Test

This scale developed by Bhagwatar (1988) with slight modifications was employed. The test consisted of 13 items covering different areas related to individual, family and society. There were three levels as 0, 1 and 2 which

indicate, not experiencing the event, experienced the event in the past and experienced the event at present respectively. The scheme of scoring to indicate the degrees of stress was from no stress to tremendously high stress scoring ranging from 1-7.

#### 2. Socio-Economic Status Scal

Developed by the researcher, which was used to measure the socio-economic status of the students.

#### 3. Aspiration Scale

This scale measures the individuals desire to achieve in accordance with the expectation/self expectation of the society and depending upon one's own capacity, ability and memory. It consists of three items each item has twelve choices for high, medium and low level of aspiration with scoring of 5, 3 and 1 respectively.

#### 4. Study Habits Schedule

Developed by combining relevant items selected from the study involvement inventory developed by Bhatnagar (1988), study habit inventory by Rao's (1954), and study habit inventory by Patel (1970). There were totally 29 items covering 5 areas viz. planning of work, notes taking, revision and preparation for examination, home and school environment, confidence, general habits and attitudes and hours of the study. The inventory consisted of both positive and negative statements. Each statements is to be measured and quantified on a three point scale namely 'always', 'sometimes' and 'never' with scores of 5/3/1 given respectively for the statements 1/3/5 scores were given. The reliability of the scale established through split-half method is 0.82.

#### 5. Study Problems Schedule

There were totally 48 items covering 5 areas viz., concentration and clarity, motivation and interest, facilities in home and school, aspiration and problems related to academic, social, emotional, personal and health areas. Each problem is to be rated on three point scale namely always, 'sometimes' and 'never' with scores of 5/3/1 given respectively. The reliability of the scale established through split-half method is 0.896.

#### Data Collection Procedure

The questionnaire was self administered to fifteen students at a time who were selected randomly

from the list of students who were present on the day of visit for PUC I and II year science, commerce and arts faculty. The questionnaire was given both in English as well as regional language in order to elicit accurate information. A sub sample of 10-15 II year PUC students were interviewed in their homes and recorded for further qualitative analysis. The reliability of the scale was found to be 0.89.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the correlation coefficients between stress and aspiration are presented in table-1. The results indicate that aspirations is positively and significantly related to academic stress indicating that as the aspiration increased the level of academic stress also increased. This result is supported by Agolla and Ongori, 2009; and Ang and Huan, 2006, whose studies were reported that self-expectations and expectations of family members/parents were the stressors for stress among students.

**Table 1: Correlation coefficient between Aspiration, study habits, study problems on academic stress**

	Aspiration	Study habits	Study problems	Academic stress
Aspiration	1 P =.0	0.59 P = .261	0.027 P = .609	0.13* P = .014
Study habits		1 P =.0	-0.22** P = .00	-0.19 P = .00
Study problems			1 P =.0	0.25** P = .00
Academic stress				1 P =.0

\* Significant at 0.05 level of probability

\*\* Significant at 0.01 level of probability

The finding of the present study is in line with studies reported by Gamelch et al., (1984). They found that sources of stress were decidedly high self expectation. Rao's (1954) reports revealed that feeling of success and failure was a causative factor of stress. Stronger the feeling of success greater was the level of aspirations. A relatively high stress among PUC students may be due to their desire to get more marks, high expectation about the future and the drive to satisfy parent's expectation.

It was also observed that the students who had better study habits i.e. planning and preparing well before the examination, note taking, revision and discussion that

facilities good performance lead to less academic stress, while the students who had poor study habits had more study problems show more academic stress.

Study problems and academic stress are found to be positively and significantly related indicating increased the study problems with academic stress also increased. These results are in line with Mechanic (1962) who revealed that severity of stress increased as the anticipated stress / study problems increased. It may be due to the reason that with more study problems individuals may not be able to cope with their problems and such problem put them under more academic stress.

### Influence of Socio-Economic and Demographic Factors on Academic Stress

Table-2 reveals that academic stress was related to many of the socio-economic (SES) factors variables viz., mother's education, sibling, family size and type of family. As the mother's education increased the academic stress of their children will decreased. As the number of siblings

increased the academic stress of the students also increased. Family size was negatively and significantly related indicating that as the family size increased the academic stress decreased. Type of family was significantly related to academic stress indicating that students from the joint family had more academic stress than nuclear families.

**Table 2: Effect of socio-economic and demographic factors on academic stress**

	Caste/ Religion	Father's Education	Mother's Education	Father's Occupation	Total Family Income	No.of Siblings	No.of Family members	Type of Family
Aspiration	0.11 P = 0.04	0.03 P = 0.62	0.03 P = 0.62	0.06 P = 0.23	0.04 P = .40	-0.04 P = 0.38	-0.06 P = 0.22	-0.05 P = 0.20
Study habits	0.77 P = 0.1	-0.004 P = 0.99	0.012 P=0.81	-0.014 P=0.78	-0.05 P=0.2	-0.03 P=0.4	-0.03 P=0.4	0.00 P=0.9
Study problems	-0.00 P=0.8	-0.12 P=0.02	-0.05 P=0.27	-0.01 P=0.78	-0.004 P=0.9	-0.01 P=0.7	0.04 P=0.35	0.04 P=0.3
Academic stress	-0.06 P = 0.1	-0.08 P=0.9	-0.11* P=0.3	-0.67 P=0.13	-0.04 P=0.3	0.4** P=0.3	-0.11* P=0.4	0.2** P=0.00

\* Significant at 0.05 level of probability

\* Significant at 0.01 level of probability

This result is supported by Zeidner's (1992) findings that students from lower socio-economic status were found to be more stressed than respective upper class students. It might be due to more number of children in a family the parental attention gets divided and children get deprived. It was expressed by the students that due to joint family system, parents do not spend much of time in their children's academic work. More quarrels and conflicts among the members and less privacy to study lead to unsupportive atmosphere, lead to increased academic stress .

### CONCLUSION

High aspiration, poor study habits, study

problems, low socio-economic conditions are the stressors/factors that influence academic stress. So the students should have the aspiration / expectation about their study, not beyond their capacities and abilities. Students need proper counselling while selecting their courses at intermediate level. The parents should consider the child's interest and aptitude and not impose on selecting the courses. The family environment should be congenial and the learning process should be made pleasurable and parents should avoid making it as a stressful event for adolescents. Finally supportive and stimulating atmosphere is very necessary for the students to progress in their academic life and for reaching their aim or goal.

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