

Influence of Gender and Types of School on Academic Stress of Senior Secondary Schools Students

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Abstract

This study analyses the effect of gender and type of school on school-related stress among senior secondary students in Rohtak district of Haryana. The main purpose was to investigate the stress among male and female students and to compare the stress in students of government and private schools. Data was collected from an equal number of students (i.e.:50 boys and 50 girls, 50 public and 50 private schools). The research design used in the study was a descriptive survey. Results indicated that academic stress levels were not significantly affected by gender. School type was, however, a significant factor, with adolescents in private schools reporting higher levels of stress than their counterparts attending government schools. The school environment was found to be a stronger predictor of academic stress than gender. According to these results, it is suggested that teachers and parents should implement supportive educational systems that offer access to counseling/ stress management services in order to create healthy mental and emotional conditions for students.

Keywords: *Academic Stress, Gender, School Type, Senior Secondary Students*

Introduction

Academic stress is defined as the feeling of tension that is triggered by stressors whose response, which is proportionate to the intensity of the stimuli, requires an effort to adapt to it, and which involves a change in the balance of the system from homeostasis. It's a common problem for students from different ages and systems of education throughout the world. Such stress is commonly experienced when people feel a mismatch between the demands of the environment and their own ability to cope with those demands, generally leading to psychological, physiological and behavioral reactions which can cause detrimental effects on their academic performance and mental health (Reddy et al., 2016). The causes of academic stress are complex, including impractical academic expectations, ineffective time management, and social expectations. These factors frequently result in emotional discomfort and cognitive deficits (Prasad & Vaidya, 2017). The pressure of exams is endemic to the 'exam-shattering education system' that is followed in India, where learning is primarily focused on performance indicators and standardized evaluations (Kant, Jain, Yadav, & Tomar, 2023).

A number of researchers have attempted to provide more precise meanings of academic stress. Tripathi & Sharma (2013) explain it as a psychological disequilibrium between perceived academic expectations and a student's perceived abilities. Furthermore, cultural and linguistic differences can act as major stress factors on international students, as pointed out by Brown (2008). Academic Stress Based on Mohammad and Ospanova (2020) the definition of academic stress is a physiological reaction to excessive academic requirements, which may result for students in fatigue and lack of motivation. Academic stress is a universal phenomenon with no boundaries of a particular country or educational system. Students of competitive academic culture, as in India, often suffer the stress due to academic pressure competition (Negi & Kaur, 2018). On the other hand, international students might struggle to deal with acculturative stress when they are exposed to new academic and social environments (Desa, Yusooff, & Kadir, 2012).

Psychosocial factors are also key to academic stress. Srinivasa (2022) highlights the differential experiences of stress for domestic versus international students and the role of culture on the experience of stress. In India, adolescents predominantly experience stress due to the societal demands and focus on academics (Singh & Kumar, 2021). Global perspectives provide empirical support for the complexity of academic stress. For example, adolescents in Hong Kong experience a great deal of stress related to academic overload and social network pressure, and such stress leads to poor mental health outcomes (Ng, 2016). In the same vein even in Northern India, family income and parents' educational status had a significant impact on the perception of students' stress among other socio-economic factors had a significant influence on stress (Negi & Kaur, 2018).

Various supportive techniques, such as counseling services and educational approaches to promote supportive learning environments, have been recommended to deal with academic stress. These types of interventions are important for strengthening resilience in students and psychological well-being (Barseli & Ildil, 2017). In the end, academic stress is a multi-determinant and multinational problem influenced by personal, cultural, and systemic drivers. Working through these layers and creating multidimensional support is a key tool to a healthier collegiate culture and better student mental health outcomes.

Statement of the Problem

“Influence of Gender and Types of School on Academic Stress of Senior Secondary Schools Students”

Review of Literature

Brown (2008) looked into the experience of international master's students in the early stage of their master's programmes and found that language proficiency and change in academic culture were two major anxiety sources. Although such stress was very high at the outset of the academic year, it decreased over time as students became accustomed to their new learning environment. The results highlighted the importance of cultural orientation programs to help ease the transition for international students.

Desa et al. (2012) investigated the academic stress of students in Malaysia. They found that environmental restrictions combined with a lack of recognition in society were the main stressors negatively influencing academic motivation and performance in gifted students. The research recommended the creation of inclusive academic spaces aligned with institutionally embedded culturally relevant policies.

Jayasankara et al. (2016) dealt with the cultural and cognitive and cultural dimensions of academic stress and its implications with reference to the Indian situation. Their results pointed to the cognitive deficits associated with high stress, which could be attributed in part to the very competitive character of academic models. The authors highlighted the importance of culturally sensitive approaches which consider both the amount of educational pressure or challenge and situational or context-specific expectations.

Barseli and Ildil (2017) provide insights into academic stress in Indonesian students, in which they define academic stress as a subjective response to behavioural academic demands. They emphasized the role of school-based counseling in the reduction of stress and the pursuit for a more balanced education for the students.

Negi and Kaur (2018) examined contributing factors in stress perception in Indian undergraduate students with respect to socio-personal and academic factors. Low family income and low parental education were consistently associated with higher levels of stress, which led researchers to call for targeted support for students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

Mohammad and Ospanova (2020) studied resilience to stress among Kazakh and international medical students. They found that high academic demands impaired students' cognitive performance and motivation. The researchers encouraged the inclusion of stress management training into medical programs for the promotion of student wellness.

Srinivasa (2022) contrasted the stress over studies between American and international students and reported that academic stress among native students was high because of competition and among international students was more for culture shock. Implications of the study emphasized that culturally sensitive mental health interventions are needed for schools with diverse student populations.

Kant, Jain, Yadav, and Tomar (2023) conducted a cross-sectional study on academic stress among Indian adolescents in coaching institutes. There was a high proportion of those experiencing stress (46 per cent), which they attributed largely to societal expectations of academic success. The authors suggested the implementation of mental health interventions in coaching centers to promote better mental health of students.

Kumar and Priyadarshini (2024) found that there was no substantial difference in academic stress across genders, but the type of school was a significant influence, where the private school going students experienced greater stress. They stress that systemic and school-based mental health services are critical for reducing stress and improving student well-being.

Together, these studies portray an intricate, multi-dimensional manner in which academic stress is formed, which is mediated by cognitive, cultural, socio-economic, and institutional factors.

Research Gap

While extensive research has been conducted on academic stress across various cultural, socioeconomic, and institutional contexts, there remains a notable gap in examining the combined influence of **gender and types of schools**, particularly within the context of **senior secondary school students**. Most prior studies have either focused on higher education or treated gender and school type as isolated variables. Furthermore, there is limited comparative insight into how these factors jointly affect stress levels in adolescent students during a critical academic stage. This gap highlights the need for focused research that integrates both gender and institutional context to better inform targeted interventions.

Significance of Study

The research on stress associated with school, considering gender and type of school, offers valuable insights into the complexities faced by senior secondary school students. Academic stress significantly impacts students' mental well-being, academic achievements, and overall welfare, making it a focal point in educational studies. By examining stress disparities based on gender, the study sheds light on gender-specific stressors, enabling a better comprehension of the distinct challenges experienced by each gender. These findings have the potential to assist educators, counselors, and policymakers in formulating targeted strategies that address the unique personal and developmental requirements of both male and female students.

Furthermore, the difference between public and private school students emphasizes the importance of institutional influences—e.g., availability of resources, pedagogical strategies, the type of teacher–student interaction, peer variables in determining students' anxiety in the study context. Knowing what the make-up of significant contributors to students' stress from overarching environments could help to further tailor school-designed programs.

By pinpointing important stressors from a demographic and institutional perspective, the results can inform the development of a model of education that attenuates stress and fosters mental well-being. Finally, this research has the potential to lead to more equitable, nurturing learning environments that enable students' holistic development so that they are better prepared to face academic and life challenges in the future.

Objectives

1. To examine the academic stress levels among male and female senior secondary school students.
2. To analyse the academic stress levels experienced by students in government and private senior secondary schools.

Hypotheses

1. There exists no significant difference between the academic stress of male and female senior secondary school students
2. There exists no significant difference between the academic stress of government and private senior secondary school students.

Methodology

To align with the study's purpose and research objectives, the Descriptive Survey Method was adopted. This approach was considered suitable for systematically collecting and analyzing data to investigate academic stress levels among senior secondary students, with specific attention to differences based on gender and type of school.

Population

The target population for this study comprised senior secondary school students from the Rohtak district of Haryana. The sample included students from both government and private institutions, ensuring representation across varied educational settings within the district.

Sample

The study sample included 200 senior secondary school students. They came from both Government and private senior secondary schools in the Rohtak district of Haryana to ensure a mix of both types of institutions for comparison.

Tool Used

Scale for Assessing Academic Stress by Udai Kumar Sinha (2014)

Statistical Techniques Used

The data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Mean and Standard Deviation were utilized to ascertain the mean and standard deviation of Academic Stress scores, respectively. Additionally, the independent samples t-test was employed to investigate academic stress disparities based on gender and type of school.

Data Analysis

Table 1: Comparison of Academic Stress in relation to gender

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t' value
Academic Stress	Male students	100	15.36	6.765	1.031 ^{NS}
	Female students	100	15.03	5.764	

NS= Not significant

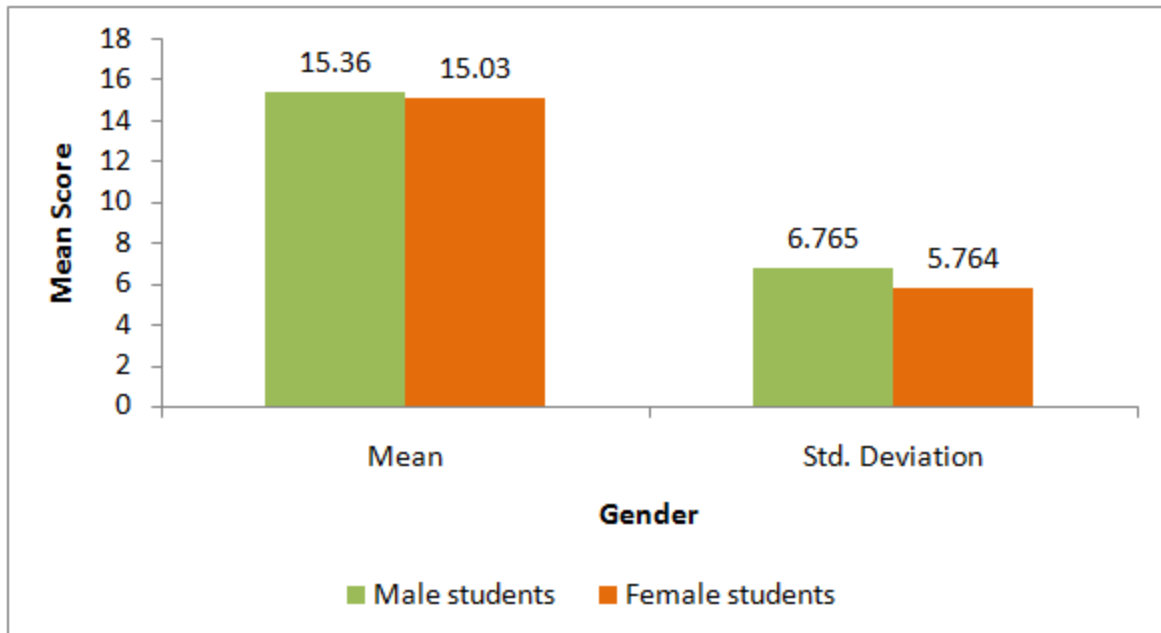


Fig. 1: Mean and SD Scores of Academic Stress in relation to Gender

Table 1 presents a comparison of academic stress levels between male and female senior secondary students. The mean stress score for boys was slightly higher ($M = 15.36$, $SD = 6.765$) than that of girls ($M = 15.03$, $SD = 5.764$). However, the obtained t -value of 1.031 indicates that this difference is not statistically significant at the 0.05 level. These results suggest that gender does not have a significant impact on academic stress among the students in the sample.

Table 2: Comparison of Academic Stress in relation to types of school

Variable	Types of School	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	't' value
Academic 'Stress	Government school students	100	14.28	5.672	2.347*
	Private school students	100	16.11	6.857	

**Significant at 0.05 level

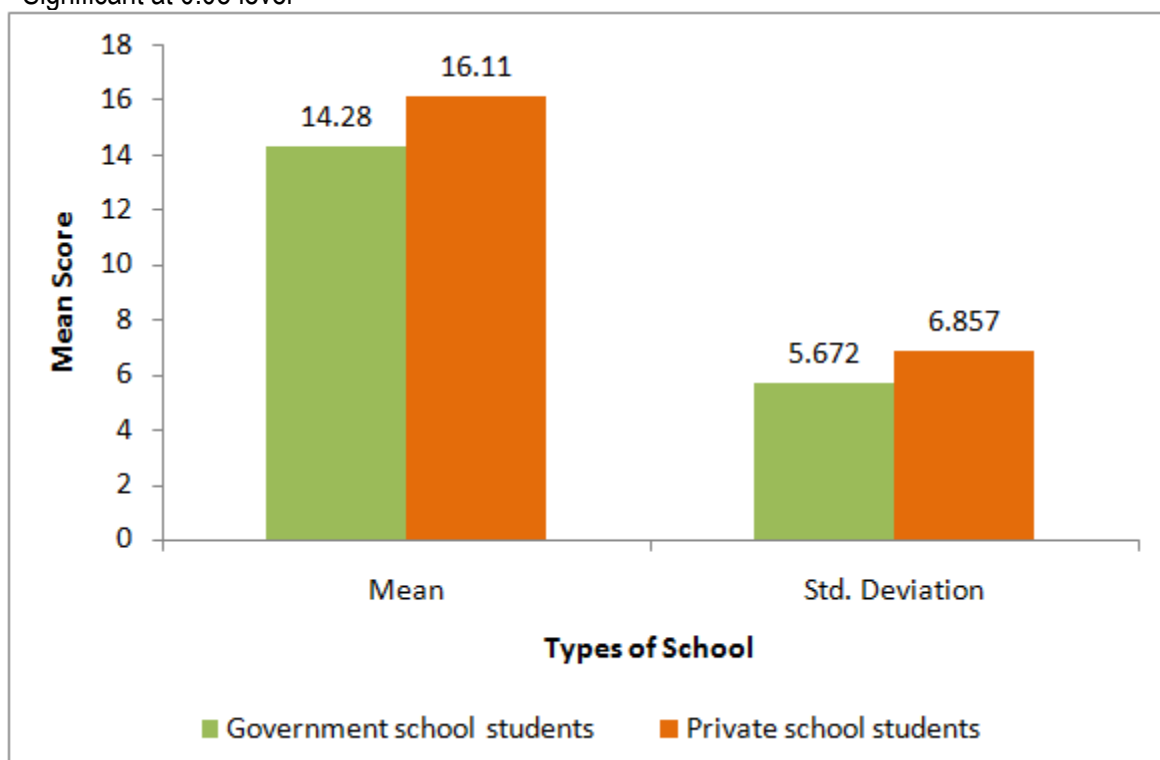


Fig. 2: Mean and SD Scores of Academic Stress in relation to types of school

The academic stress levels of senior secondary students in government and private schools are compared in Table 2. The findings reveal that private school students ($M=16.11$, $SD=6.857$) experience higher academic stress levels compared to government school students ($M=14.28$, $SD=5.672$). The t -value of 2.347 is statistically significant at the 0.05 level, indicating a meaningful difference. These results suggest that the type of school plays a crucial role in academic stress, with private school students facing higher stress, potentially due to academic pressures, competitive environments, and school demands.

Findings

This study found that there was not any significant difference in the academic stress of male and female senior secondary school students. Both groups were found to be equally stressed, regardless of gender, suggesting that the influence of gender in experiencing academic stress was marginal in the selected sample.

On the other hand, a significant difference was found in the academic stress of students belonging to government and private schools. Academic stress among the private school students was also elevated as compared to their government school counterparts. This implies that institutional factors such as academic requirements, school atmosphere, and achievement anxiety may result in high levels of stress experienced by private school students.

Discussion of Results

The results of the current study provide important information on the patterns of academic stress among senior secondary school students in Hong Kong, particularly by gender and school type. In their study on academic stress, they also reported no significant difference in the level of academic stress for both male and female students. The emergence of this pattern is in line with recent evidence suggesting that academic pressure is more a function of institutional and curricular rather than gender differences. Tripathi and Sharma (2013) also mentioned that academic stress comes from the discrepancy between academic requirements and perceived capabilities, and it is highly experienced in both genders worldwide.

However, the difference that existed between government and private school students was significant, which is consistent with a number of studies. The present study also came up with the finding of a higher level of academic stress among private school students, which was supported in the studies of Negi and Kaur (2018) that socio-economic variables (like family income and parental education) frequently found in private schools, higher academic pressure. This disparity was attributed to differences in institutions by Kumar and Priyadarshini (2024), such as higher levels of competition, parental pressure and academic burden in private schools. Jayasankara Reddy et al. (2016) also pointed out that cognitive pressure-driven impairments are prevalent in areas with competitive educational structures, such as Indian private schools and therefore, there is a necessity for tackling measures that can harmonize academics and mental health. These results are corroborated by the international context. For example, Ng (2016) studying Hong Kong undergraduates found some key sources of stress as being academic overload and peer pressure, issues endemic to private institutions. Also, Desa, Yusoff, and Kadir (2012) and Srinivasa (2022) emphasized the influence of environmental and institutional factors such as cultural demands and acculturative stress on students' experience of stress.

In addition, the need for systemic and culturally responsive interventions permeates literature. Barseli and Ildil (2017) supported the need for counseling services in Indonesian schools for students dealing with academic pressures—an approach that can be successfully emulated by Indian schools and colleges. The significance of these support systems is similarly underscored in Mohammad and Ospanova (2020) where they reported a stress management training approach significantly enhanced the cognitive and motivational abilities of medical students.

Lastly, Kant et al. (2023) reported that the academic stress of Indian coaching students was mostly influenced by social expectations, a trend visible herein, where students of private schools, whose stakes are high in terms of social and institutional prices, experienced higher levels of stress.

Therefore, the current study not only replicates known literature findings but it also highlights the urgent demand for interventions at the school level. These would include mental health counseling, stress reduction programs, and institutional reforms, especially in private schools, which would ensure balanced and supportive conditions for learning. Academic stress, which appears to be multi-faceted according to both this study and the reviewed literature, calls for collaboration of educators, parents, and policymakers to foster the psychological well-being and academic achievement among students.

Implications and Suggestions

The implications of these results are well-established for educators, school leaders, families, and policymakers. First, the fact that there is no gender difference in academic stress may indicate that the university can design stress management measures which can be neutral for gender by emphasizing the general causes of stress that affect equally to all students. Second, the increased stress levels experienced by the students from private schools raise the need for reflection on the current academic culture at these schools. There should be a balance between academic rigor and mental health. Schools need to know that there is such a thing as too much school pressure, which can result in poor performance, anxiety, and a lack of motivation to excel academically.

Based on the above, some suggestions are given. Schools should have integrated health and wellness services that feature ongoing mental health check-ins, professional counseling, and peer-based support networks. The curriculum should include life skills education programs to help them learn time management, how to cope with stress, and regulate their own emotions. Teachers' ought to be provided with education in student-sensitive pedagogy for creating an encouraging and accepting classroom atmosphere. Additionally, the education of parents to educate them about harmful situations of academic burden factors and the need for their provision of emotional support could be conducted through parenting education programs. Policymakers should develop educational policies that emphasize the mental health of students equally with their academic results as part of a national school environment that nurtures and cultivates harmonious development rather than rampant academic competition. Together, these steps can contribute to a healthier academic environment, with the result that students are better equipped to succeed academically and in life.

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