



## A STUDY OF ACADEMIC STRESS AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN RELATION TO THEIR SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS

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### Abstract

The present research work is an attempt by the investigator to study academic stress among secondary school students in relation to their socio-economic status. A descriptive research method was used. A sample of 120 secondary school students was taken based on a random sampling method. Bisht Battery of Stress Scale (for adolescents and adults) developed and standardized by Dr. (Km.) Abha Rani Bisht and Socio-economic status scale developed by Dr. A. Kalia and Dr. Sahu were used to collect the data. Statistical techniques such as Mean, Standard Deviation, 't-test, and Karl Pearson's Product Moment Correlation were used to analyze the data. It was observed from the analysis of data that female secondary school students have more academic stress than male secondary school students, while students having low and high levels of socio-economic status do not differ significantly on academic stress and academic stress and socio-economic status of secondary school students are negatively correlated with each other. It can be interpreted that the higher the socio-economic status, the lower the academic stress of secondary school students and vice-versa.

**Keywords:** Academic stress, socioeconomic status, secondary school students and gender.

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### Introduction:

Education refers to the process of learning and acquiring information. Education in the largest sense is any act or experience that has a formative effect on the mind, character, or physical ability of an individual. In its technical sense, education is a process by which society deliberately transmits its accumulated knowledge, skills, and values from one generation to another.

### Stress:

Stress is an unavoidable consequence of modern living. The growth of industries, pressure in the urban areas, quantitative growth in population, and various problems in day-to-day life are some of the reasons for the increase in stress. Stress is a condition of strain that

has a direct bearing on the emotions, thought processes, and physical conditions of a person. Stress in our society is not invisible. Person whether a child, adult, man, woman, employed, or unemployed everyone is facing stress in his/her way. Today's life is full of challenges. In everyday life, we come across many situations. Some of them act as a source of inspiration for us and some cause challenges. It is human nature to face the challenges boldly or to escape from them. All this varies from person to person. Any challenge that exceeds the coping abilities of the individual becomes stress.

### Academic Stress:

Academic stress refers to the pressure to perform well in final school Examinations, fear of punishment and



competitive examinations that is experienced by adolescents. For some students, the experience of academic stress leads to a sense of distress, which is generally manifested in a variety of psychological and behavioral problems. The experience of academic stress and adolescent distress has been identified and explored by researchers in Korea (Lee & Larson, 1996, 2000) and Japan (Hill, 1996). In modern society, young and old experience the emotion of being stressed. During adolescence, 11-19 years of age, the levels of stress increase significantly. Teens today face many challenges that parents and traditional educators may not have had to experience when they were growing up. Adolescents may face multiple stressful challenges that may include parents who divorce, same-sex parents, blended step and half-sibling families, dating violence, technology used to harass or threaten others, social isolation, and the impact of a failing economy. Teen stress is often difficult to recognize and parents and educators need to know the impact of stress on adolescents to provide the necessary support and open communication to help them deal with multiple issues. Due to numerous pressures of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, adolescents are having difficulty coping and are requesting educational programs in schools to help teach them how to cope with such stressors (Bugalski, Cotta, Frydenberg, Lewis, Luscombe-Smith, McCarthy, & Poole, 2004). Being able to manage responsibilities, problems, or difficulties calmly and thoughtfully is one way of coping. Stress is the feeling of mental, physical, or emotional strain or tension. Students are being pressured frequently by a variety of factors which cause them stress.

Stressed children show signs of emotional disabilities, aggressive behavior, shyness, and social phobia and often lack interest in otherwise enjoyable activities. In a study, Dawood (1995) found that students' stress affects their academic performance. He further showed

that students' most frequently mentioned stressor was school and fear-related stressors. Many teenagers tend to become non-conformists and fall prey to teenage depression in response to a variety of growing-up anxieties. However, stress-induced fears and anxiety in children adversely affect children's performances at various levels. Hodge (1996) investigated that the prevalence of stress was found particularly among those students who were by their nature prone to anxiety. Tung and Chahal (2005) examined the relationship between stress and adjustment and found no significant causal relationship between stress and adjustment. However direction of the results implied that the level of adjustment influences the number of stressful events and the amount of stress experienced by them.

Each day we are faced with new situations that demand decisions that involve change in both our internal state and our external environment. The process of adjustment involves a person's attempt to cope with mastery and transcend such challenges. This working definition provides a starting point for understanding adjustment. However, adjustments are not always definite. Neither it is right or wrong nor do they necessarily have clear starting points or endings. This combination of questions can make the concept of adjustment difficult to grasp. According to Agrawal (2004) the adjustment of adolescents very much depends on the fulfillment of their significant specific needs which consist of physical needs, emotional needs, social needs, intellectual needs, moral needs, and vocational needs. It may be helpful, therefore, to devote a little more space to two important qualities of adjustment. First, it is a process that involves continuous changes and second people develop consistent pattern of adjustment to these constant changes. Students make many transitions during their years of schooling: from home to school, middle to



high school, and high school to college or work. These transitions are usually major events in the lives of students and parents. The stresses created by these transitions can be minimized when the new environment is responsive to each particular age group. This digest presents a brief overview of some of the issues involved in the transition from elementary to middle school and provides suggestions for transition programs and activities.

### **Socio-Economic Status:**

Socio-economic status is considered one of the important variables in social science research. It has been and is being included quite often as a variable in studies in psychology, sociology, education, and other social science streams. The construct 'socio-economic status' is used in social sciences as well by laymen quite frequently yet there is no consensus regarding its definition and measurement. The word socio comes from the word 'social' and refers to people and the ways (level) they fit into the community in which they live. It reflects how well they are educated, have jobs etc. The word 'economic' refers to the financial position of people within society and include, how much they regularly earn, whether own a house and the assets owned etc. Socio-economic status is one of the most widely studied construct in the social sciences. Socio-Economic Status (SES) is an economic and sociological combined total measure of a person's work experience and of an individual's or family's economic and social position in relation to others, based on income, education and occupation. When analyzing a family's socio-economic status, the household income, earners' education and occupation are examined, as well as combined income, versus with an individual, when their own attributes are assessed. Several indicators of one's social status, viz., education, health, contact with criminal justice system, employment/ unemployment, housing, access to services, water, sewerage etc. and of economic

position, viz., income, ownership, assets level, holdings etc. have been outlined. The variables/ components traditionally used to assess one's social standing are education, occupation and income, however, additional indicators which are considered important are employment status, possessions and even the presence of reading material at home (U.S. Department of Defence, 1986).

Socio-Economic Status is typically broken into three categories i.e. high socio-economic status, middle socio-economic status, and low socio-economic status. A family or an individual may fall into one of these categories. When placing a family or individual into one of these categories any or all of the three variables (income, education and occupation) can be assessed. A 4<sup>th</sup> variable, wealth, may also be examined when determining socio-economic status. Several ways of measuring socio-economic status have been proposed, but most include some quantification of family income, parental education, and occupational status. Research shows that socio-economic status is associated with a wide array of proposed, with most involving differences in access to material and social resources or reactions to stress-inducing conditions by both the children themselves and their parents. For children, socio-economic status impacts wellbeing at multiple levels, including both family and neighborhood. Its effects are moderated by children's own characteristics, family characteristics, and external support systems.

### **Review of Literature:**

**Gupta, Sharma and Gupta (2011)** found that female students are comparatively more predisposed for academic stress and its three constituents namely, frustration, conflict and pressure than their male counterparts. The results have been discussed for addressing the need for greater attention to the harmful psycho-somatic effects of academic stress in the adolescents, especially in girls. **Ali and Zahoor (2012)**



did not show the existence of significant difference in academic stress of males and females, the female students recorded higher in their academic stress than male students. **Bharti and Sidana (2012)** indicated significant differences between high and low emotional intelligent student teachers on academic achievement and academic stress in favour of high emotional intelligent student-teachers. **Jayanthi, Thirunavukarasu and Rajkumar (2015)** stated that adolescents with severe academic stress need to be identified early as interventions to reduce academic stress is likely to affect the occurrence and severity of depression. **Dixit and Garg (2017)** revealed that the male student's academic stress is higher than female students. The urban student's academic stress is higher than rural student. The Government school student's academic stress is less than private school students. **Rathee and Sharma (2018)** revealed that alienation was found to be significantly positively correlated with academic stress while socio-economic status was found to be negatively associated with Academic Stress. **Fatma, Anshu and Mathur (2019)** indicated that there was no significant effect of gender and socio-economic status on academic anxiety. **Swarnika (2020)** stated that there was a significant difference between the academic stress of male and female students. Significant differences found between lower SES and higher SES students on academic stress. **Elavarasi and Rajendran (2021)** observed that the independent variables like gender, age and type of family of secondary grade students have no influences on their academic stress levels. However, the only variable influencing their academic stress levels is the 'number of siblings in their home'. **Baro and Mishra (2022)** revealed that there is a negative correlation between academic anxiety and the socioeconomic status of adolescents and 51.4 % of the variation in academic anxiety is explained by socioeconomic Status along with its dimensions.

### Need of the Study:

In adolescence, a child experiences many physical, mental and emotional changes. Stress and anxiety in children and teenagers are just as prevalent as in adults. Negligence of parents, high expectations in academic or other performances, abused childhood, growing up tensions and demand for familial responsibility, etc. the main causes of childhood and teen stress. Parents who are not emotionally available for their children or lack positive coping mechanisms themselves, often spur stress in their offspring. Stressed children show signs of emotional disabilities, aggressive behavior, shyness, and social phobia and often lack interest in otherwise enjoyable activities. In a study, Dawood (1995) found that students' stress affects their academic performance. He further showed that the most frequently mentioned stressor by students was school and fear-related stressors. Many teenagers tend to become non-conformists and fall prey to teenage depression in response to a variety of growing-up anxieties. However, stress-induced fears and anxiety in children adversely affect children's performances at various levels. Therefore, he is always under stress and strain. As he grew, he faced many problems. In the present era, Adolescents may go under Academic Stress. The socioeconomic status of the students may affect the academic stress of the students. The competitive era of modern time enhance a lot of academic stress on students. The present study tells us the effect of SES and gender on Academic stress. So the investigator wants to study the effect of SES and gender on Academic Stress.

### Statements of the Problem

**A Study of Academic Stress among Secondary School Students in relation to their Socio-Economic Status**

**OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF THE KEYWORDS:**



### Academic Stress

Academic stress refers to the pressure derived from performance well in final school examination, from punishment and competitive examination that is expressed by adolescents.

### Socio-Economic Status

Socio-economic status is considered an indicator of the economic and social position of a person in society (Stwarski and Boesel, 1988).

### Objectives:

1. To study and compare the academic stress of male and female secondary school students.
2. To study and compare academic stress of secondary school students having low and high level of socio-economic status.
3. To study the relationship between academic stress and socioeconomic status of secondary school students

### Hypotheses:

1. There is no significant difference in academic stress of male and female secondary school students.
2. There is no significant difference in academic stress of secondary school students having low and high level of socio-economic status.
3. There is no significant relationship between

academic stress and socioeconomic status of

secondary school students

### Method of Research :

The descriptive survey method will be used for the present study. It is commonly used in educational research to study existing conditions and phenomenon.

### Population:

The population for the present study comprised of 9<sup>th</sup> class students form Rohtak district.

### Sample:

One hundred twenty secondary school students will be selected as a sample for the present study. Random sampling technique used for the selection of sample :

### Variables Used:

- Dependent : Academic Stress
- Independent : Socio-economic status and gender.

### Tools Used:

- Bisht Battery of Stress Scale (for adolescent and adults) developed and standardized by Dr. (Km.) Abha Rani Bisht.
- The socio-economic status scale developed by Dr. A. Kalia and Dr. Sahu

### Statistical Techniques to be Used:

Statistical techniques such as Mean, Standard Deviation, 't'-test, and Karl Pearson's Product Moment Correlation were used to analyze the data.

Table 1:

Means, S.D.s, and 't' ratio of male and female secondary school students on academic stress

Variable	Group	N	Mean	S.D.	't' ratios	Level of Significance
Academic Stress	Male students	60	67.75	14.98	2.459	Significant at 0.05
	Female students	60	71.43	12.56		

Table 1 shows that the mean scores of academic stress between male and female secondary school students are 67.75 and 71.43 respectively. The 't' value comes out to be 2.459 which is significant at 0.05 level. It depicts that male and female secondary school students

differ significantly on academic stress. The higher mean score of female secondary school students shows that they have more academic stress than male secondary school students.



Table 2:

Means, S.D.s, and 't' ratio of academic stress of secondary school students having low and high levels of socio-economic status

Variable	Group	N	Mean	S.D.	't' ratios	Level of Significance
Academic Stress	Low Socio-economic status	22	71.63	15.26	0.908	Not Significant
	High Socio-economic status	52	68.51	12.70		

Table 2 shows that the mean scores of academic stress of secondary school students having low and high level of socio-economic status are 71.63 and 68.51 respectively. The 't' value comes out to be 0.908 which

is not significant. It depicts that secondary school students having low and high level of socio-economic status do not differ significantly on academic stress.

Table 3:

Relationship between academic stress and socio-economic status of secondary school students

Variables	N	Coefficient of correlation (r)
Academic Stress	120	-0.210*
Socio-economic status	120	

\*Significant at 0.05 level

TABLE 3 depicts that the coefficient of correlation between academic stress and the socio-economic status of secondary school students is -0.210 which is significant at 0.05 level of significance. Hence, there exists a negative and significant correlation between these parameters. It indicates that academic stress and the socioeconomic status of secondary school students are negatively correlated with each other. So it could be concluded that secondary school students have more academic stress if they have low socio-economic status. It can be interpreted that the higher the socio-economic status, the lower the academic stress of secondary school students and vice-versa.

### Findings

1. Male and female secondary school students do differ significantly in academic stress. Female secondary school students have more academic stress than male secondary school students.
2. Secondary school students having low and high levels of socio-economic status do not differ

significantly in academic stress.

3. Academic stress and the socio-economic status of secondary school students are negatively correlated with each other. It can be interpreted that higher the socioeconomic status, lower the academic stress of secondary school students and vice-versa.

On the basis of the above findings, it can be concluded that socioeconomic status has an impact on the academic stress of senior secondary students. Students belonging to low socio-economic status have higher levels of academic stress as compared to students belonging to high socio-economic status, especially boys. However, female students were found to have better socio-economic status than male students. Personal inadequacy and inadequate study facilities cause more academic stress among students belonging to low socio-economic status. It is obvious from the present study that socio-economic status has a significant impact on academic stress as low socio-economic status and its correlates, such as lower



education, poverty, and poor health, ultimately affect our society as a whole. Therefore it is recommended through this study that the government should take serious initiatives to provide jobs and raise the socio-economic status of people throughout the country.

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