

Stress in relation to Socio-Emotional Adjustment: A Comparison of Tribal and Non-Tribal Secondary School Students

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Abstract

The present study aims to examine the relationship between academic stress and socio-emotional adjustment. It also seeks to compare academic stress and educational adjustment between tribal and non-tribal secondary school students. The study was conducted on a sample of 300 secondary school students, and correlation analysis was employed to analyze the data. There exists a negative relationship. The results indicate a significant relationship between academic stress and socio-emotional adjustment among tribal students. Based on these findings, teachers can implement strategies to reduce academic stress, thereby improving students' educational adjustment and overall academic performance. This research provides a foundation for further investigations into the underlying causes of these differences, ultimately contributing to addressing educational challenges faced by the tribal community and also revamp the educational difficulties among tribal community.

Key Words: Socio-emotional adjustment, Academic stress

1. Introduction

You may have heard someone say that “somebody just doesn’t adjust to situation” or “somebody facing problem in adjustment”. Adjustment is a necessary characteristic to be able to live peacefully in this world. Adjustment problem starts right from the birth of and continues till death, various situations arise at home, school, college, and workplace where we need to give up a little of our demands and accept what is present. Adjustment is the process of arriving at a balanced state between the need of individual and their satisfaction. Home and school play pivotal role in the adjustment of an individual.

Academic stress is mental distress with respect to some anticipated frustration associated with academic failure or even unawareness to the possibility of such failure. The American Institute of Stress points out that "stress can have wide ranging effects on emotion, mood, and behavior." Stress affects both students' physical and mental functioning, Stress is the key for survival, but too much stress can be detrimental.

Emotional stress that stays around for weeks or months can weaken the immune system and cause high blood pressure, fatigue, depression, anxiety and even heart disease. In particular, too much epinephrine can be harmful to your heart.

Stress refers to the physical, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral responses to events that are perceived as threatening or challenging. It is an internal state that can be triggered by physical demands on the body, as well as by environmental and social situations that are perceived as potentially harmful, uncontrollable, or beyond our ability to cope. Stress often arises from life events and the pressures of daily living.

Academic stress refers to mental distress related to the anticipation of academic failure or even the fear of such a possibility. According to the American Institute of Stress, stress can significantly impact emotions, mood, and behavior. It affects both the physical and mental functioning of students. While a certain level of stress is essential for motivation and survival, excessive stress can be harmful. Prolonged emotional stress can weaken the immune system, raise blood pressure, and lead to fatigue, depression, anxiety, and even heart disease. In particular, high levels of epinephrine over an extended period can negatively affect heart health.

The definition of academic stress is the anxiety and stress that comes from schooling and education. There is often a lot of pressure that comes along with pursuing a degree and one's education. There is studying, homework, tests, labs, reading, and quizzes. There is the stress of doing all of the work, balancing the time and finding time for extra-curricular activities. Academic stress is especially hard on school students who are often living away from home for the first time.

Teachers expect work to be completed on time. Students may underestimate the amount of time it takes to complete reading and writing assignments, to print out copies of their work. Stress and its manifestations such as anxiety, depression, and burnout, have always been seen as a common problem among people in different professions and occupations. In the last few decades, alarm has already been provoked by the proliferation of books, research reports, popular articles and the growing number of organized workshops, aiming to teach people how to cope with this phenomenon (Keinan & Perlberg 1986). Keinan and Perlberg (1986) argue that the feelings of frustration, anxiety, and depression are among the potential consequences of high degree of stress. Mckean et al. (2000) maintain that stressors alone do not produce anxiety, depression or tensions. Instead, the interaction between stressors and the person's perception and the reaction to these stressors cause stress. Environmental stress arises when external demands or stimuli are perceived as exceeding an individual's ability to cope (Shirom, 1986). Academic stress among students has been widely studied, with researchers identifying common stressors such as excessive assignments, competition with peers, academic failure, and poor relationships with fellow students or faculty (Fairbrother & Warn, 2003).

Academic stressors often stem from students' perception of the vast amount of knowledge they are expected to acquire, combined with the belief that there is insufficient time to do so (Carveth et al., 1996). Students commonly report experiencing academic stress at predictable points during the semester, with major sources including studying for and taking exams, competition for grades, and the pressure to absorb a large volume of material in a limited timeframe (Abouserie, 1994). When stress is perceived negatively or becomes overwhelming, it can lead to both physical and psychological problems. To manage stress, students frequently rely on strategies such as effective time management, seeking social support, positive

reappraisal, and engaging in leisure activities (Murphy & Archer, 1996). The pressure to perform well in the examination or test and time allocated makes academic environment very stressful (Erkutlu & Chafra, 2006). This is likely to affect the social relations both within the institution and outside which affects the individual person's life in terms of commitment to achieving the goals (Fairbrother & Warn, 2003).

Each child possesses unique instincts and inherent tendencies. If a child is not allowed to behave in accordance with their natural disposition, and instead is forced to conform to imposed social norms and ideals, it may lead to maladjustment. In such cases, the child may experience significant tension, stress, strain, and internal conflict. Psychological research has now confirmed that every child has distinct interests, inclinations, aptitudes, abilities, and needs, which differ from those of others.

2. Need and Significance

Life today has become increasingly complex and filled with tension. We live in an era marked by speed, rapid changes, and endless desires, all of which can lead to stress, anxiety, negativity, and depression. Amidst the many challenges that college students face daily—such as financial concerns, friendships, roommates, romantic relationships, family issues, jobs, and more—academics must remain a top priority. Education plays a crucial role in a child's overall development. In this context, the teacher holds a vital responsibility in supporting students' adjustment. It is important to note that adjustment is not a simple concept like adaptation or accommodation; it involves a more comprehensive process of achieving balance between personal needs and environmental demands.

It is actually a behavioral process by which humans and other animals maintain an equilibrium among their various needs or between their needs and the obstacles of their environments, with the development of a child. The classroom teacher plays the most strategic role to help the students in their adjustment. A well-adjusted person has a balanced philosophy of life. The investigator felt a need to investigate how Academic Stress and Educational Adjustment relate to each other.

3. Objectives

1. To find out the relationship between Academic Stress and Adjustment of Secondary School tribal students.
2. To identify the relationship between Academic Stress and Adjustment of Secondary School non-tribal students.
3. To compare the relationship between Academic Stress and Socio-Emotional Adjustment of tribal and non-tribal Secondary School Students.

Hypothesis

1. There exists no relationship between Academic Stress and Adjustment in Secondary School Tribal Students.
2. There exists no relationship between Academic Stress and Adjustment in Secondary School Non-Tribal students.
3. There exists significant differences in the correlation between Academic Stress and Socio-Emotional Adjustment of Tribal and Non-Tribal Secondary School Students.

Methodology

The researcher used Survey design to execute the study, which comes under the purview of descriptive research. The population for the study is Secondary School students of Kerala state. The sampling technique used was simple random sampling technique with the size of the sample as 300 giving representation to 150 Secondary School Tribal students and 150 Secondary School Non-Tribal students of IX standard. The investigator used two tools namely, Academic Stress Inventory prepared and standardized by the investigator and Bell's Adjustment Inventory adopted by the investigator. The study followed a correlational design which includes Academic Stress as independent variable and Educational Adjustment as dependent variable. The data collected for the study was analyzed using SPSS.

Analysis and Interpretation of Results

The collected data were analyzed using SPSS and the details of analysis and results are given below.

Table 1

Data and Results of the relationship between Academic Stress and Socio-Emotional Adjustment among Tribal Secondary School Students

Variables	Strata	Total Sample	Calculated Value	r	t-value	Interpretation
Academic Stress and Socio Emotional Adjustment	Tribal	150	-0.807		16.62	Significance at 0.01 level

From the table 1 it is observed that the value of coefficient of correlation (r-value) is -0.807, this means that there exists a High Negative Relationship. The corresponding t-value for the calculated r-value is 16.62, which is more than the table value 2.58 at 0.01 level of significance. There is no relationship between Academic Stress and Socio-Emotional Adjustment in Tribal Secondary School Students. Hence accept the research hypothesis.

Table 2

Data and Results of the relationship between Academic Stress and Socio-Emotional Adjustment of Non-Tribal Secondary School Students

Variables	Strata	Total Sample	Calculated Value	r	t-value	Interpretation
Academic Stress and Socio Emotional Adjustment	Non-tribal	150	-0.752		13.87	Significance at 0.01 level

From the table 2 reveals that the value of coefficient of correlation (r-value) is -0.752, this means that there exist a substantial or Moderate Negative Relationship. The corresponding t-value for the calculated r-value is 13.87, which is more than the table value 2.58 at 0.01 level of Significance. There is no relationship between Academic Stress and Socio-Emotional Adjustment in Non-Tribal Students. Hence accept the research hypothesis.

Table 3

The Data and result of t-test for comparing the correlation between Academic Stress and Socio-Emotional Adjustment of Tribal and Non-Tribal Secondary School Students.

Variables	Strata	N	R	R correspond to Z	t-value	Interpretation
Academic Stress	Tribal	150	-0.807	1.10	1.11	Sig at 0.05 level
Socio-Emotional Adjustment	Non-Tribal	150	-0.752	0.97		

From the table 3 it is observed that the calculated t-value 1.11 is lesser than the table value 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance. This shows that there exists no significance difference in the correlation between Academic Stress and Socio-Emotional Adjustment between Tribal and Non-Tribal Secondary School Students. This means the Correlation between Academic Stress and Socio-Emotional Adjustment between Tribal and Non-Tribal Secondary School Students are almost same. There is no Significant Differences in the Correlation between Tribal and Non-Tribal Secondary School Students. Hence reject the hypothesis.

4. Conclusion

The present study highlights the relationship between academic stress and socio-emotional adjustment among secondary school students. Academic stress poses a significant threat to students' socio-emotional well-being. Therefore, it is essential for teachers and caregivers to take appropriate measures to reduce academic stress. Children should be made aware of the importance of completing their learning tasks on time and encouraged to fulfill their responsibilities promptly. Effective strategies should be implemented both in schools and at home to foster students' interest in learning and to promote a positive attitude toward life and education.

Motivation is a key factor in academic achievement. As motivation increases, scholastic performance tends to improve. Therefore, teachers, administrators, and caregivers should actively work to motivate institutionalized children. Various strategies can be employed to enhance their motivation. These children should be made aware of their strengths and weaknesses and guided to set realistic and meaningful goals. Positive reinforcement should be provided for their achievements, and appropriate support should be offered to help them overcome their challenges.



The findings regarding classroom adjustment among secondary students suggest that school authorities and the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) should take measures to improve students' classroom adjustment. When assigning academic tasks, teachers should prioritize group activities over individual tasks, as this can promote cooperation, care, sharing, support, and recognition of each other's contributions. Such an approach can enhance better classroom adjustment. Additionally, the findings highlight the need for educators to create a classroom environment that encourages students to develop internal awareness of their strengths and weaknesses. This, in turn, enables students to view their classroom as a space where they are empowered to make decisions and take responsibility for their actions.

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