

## Overcoming Academic Pressure and Mental Health Care in India: Review

Dr. V. Thangavel<sup>1\*</sup>, Bro. Xavier Munda<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Research Guide, Dept. of Education, University of Technology, Rajasthan India

<sup>2</sup>Research Scholar, Dept. of Education, University of Technology, Rajasthan, India

\*Corresponding Author: Dr. V. Thangavel

Research Guide, Dept. of Education, University of Technology, Rajasthan India

Article History: | Received: 01.11.2024 | Accepted: 06.12.2024 | Published: 09.12.2024 |

**Abstract:** The various demands that are placed on students by both internal and external sources have resulted in stress in their academic lives. Teenagers are particularly vulnerable to the problems associated with academic stress because they are adapting to both personal and cultural changes. Thus, it is crucial to comprehend the origins and consequences of academic stress to create efficient intervention strategies. The study's quantitative research approach included the use of the Academic [5]. Stress Scale to identify participants from four streams: commerce, management, humanities, and basic sciences. Five features of sources were further examined: insufficient study facilities, teacher-student connections, interpersonal difficulties with teachers, fear of failure, and personal inadequacy. Additionally, gender differences were found. School psychologists and counselors could create more effective counseling modules and intervention tactics to help pupils cope with stress if they had a better understanding of the causes of stress [6].

**Keywords:** Stress, Academic Pressure, Mental Health.

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

In India, where high-stakes tests, competitiveness, and societal expectations all have a big impact on developing brains, academic pressure is a major worry for students. If not properly managed, this stress can result in anxiety, depression, burnout, and other mental health issues. For students to successfully navigate the challenging educational landscape, they must learn how to manage academic stress while putting their general well-being first (2024) [2].

### 2. Academic Pressure Roots and Origins in India

Since education is frequently viewed as the route to success in India, kids are under tremendous pressure to perform well (2024) [2]. Students experience academic stress due to several factors:

**High Expectations from Parents and Society:** A lot of youngsters feel pressured to live up to social norms and their parents' aspirations. Significant stress might result from the anxiety of failing or falling short of these standards.

**Competitive Exams:** Board exams, JEE, NEET, and other entrance exams are extremely competitive and act as entry points to esteemed universities. Anxiety and

restless nights can result from the pressure to achieve high rankings.

**Comparative Analysis of Peers:** Social comparisons on social media and in schools can make children feel even more stressed. The mental strain is increased by the ongoing pressure to achieve better than peers.

**Fear of Failure:** Not getting the intended outcome or failing a test can be interpreted as a failure in life. Students are under more pressure to perform well at all costs because of this mentality.

### 3. Academic Stress and Mental Health Statistics:

To comprehend the scope of the problem, let's examine some important statistics:

**NCRB 2024 Report:** According to a 2024 report by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), there has been a worrying surge in student suicides over the last ten years, with a fifty percent increase in male student suicides and a sixty-one percent increase in female student suicides.

**NCRB:** In 2022, the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) reported that more than 12,500 students in India committed suicide because of academic stress and test failure. In 2016, a poll conducted by the Lokniti-CSDS Youth Studies found that over 65% of students said they

were under stress because of their grades and tests. 50% of high school students in urban India exhibited symptoms of anxiety associated with academic stress, according to a 2019 study published in the Indian Journal of Psychological Medicine.

#### 4. Academic Stress's Effect on Mental Health:

Overwhelming academic pressure can cause several mental health problems, including:

**Anxiety and Panic Attacks:** In severe situations, the dread of performing poorly on tests can lead to panic attacks and ongoing stress.

**Depression:** Persistent stress brought on by academic obligations might result in depressing, lonely, and hopeless feelings.

**Burnout:** Students who labour too much without taking breaks may experience emotional and physical tiredness, which impairs their ability to focus and perform.

**Low Self-Esteem:** When someone feels like they are always falling short of standards, their confidence and sense of worth are affected.

#### 5. Assessing Mental Health Results:

Take into account these measures to determine how successful mental health days are:

**Self-Assessment Tools:** To assess shifts in stress levels, use measures such as the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS).

**Productivity Metrics:** Before and following a mental health day, monitor work output or the accomplishment of personal objectives.

**Mood Diaries:** Keep a journal in which you record your feelings.

#### 6. Activities and Assessments for Mental Health Avoidances:

Commonly suggested activities and evaluations for mental health days include the following:

**Practices for Mindfulness:** Breathing techniques or guided meditations to improve awareness of the present.

**Keeping a Gratitude Diary:** By keeping a gratitude journal, you can change your perspective from one of stress to one of happiness.

**CBT:** Challenge and reframe negative thought patterns using cognitive behavioral techniques (CBT).

**Physical Activity:** To increase endorphin levels, engage in moderate exercise like yoga or walking.

**Music Therapy:** Use creative ways to communicate your feelings, such as music therapy or art.

#### 7. Mental Health Days: The Science behind Them:

The benefits of having mental health days are well supported by scientific studies. Key findings are as follows:

**Stress Reduction:** Prolonged stress hurts both mental and physical health, contributing to conditions like anxiety disorders, depression, and hypertension. Research indicates that taking a break might enhance emotional regulation and reduce cortisol levels, which are a sign of stress.

**Increased Productivity:** According to Harvard Business Review research, workers who put their mental health first are 23% more productive than those who don't.

**Better Cognitive Function:** The brain can rest when it is not under stress, which improves memory, creativity, and problem-solving abilities.

**Avoiding Burnout:** Burnout is common in high-stress occupations and is typified by diminished performance and emotional tiredness. The danger of burnout is considerably reduced by taking regular breaks, according to a study published in *Frontiers in Psychology*.

**Strengthened Emotional Resilience:** Mental health days can help people become more emotionally resilient so they can handle pressures in the future (2024) [1].

#### 8. Mental Health Initiatives by Govt. of India

As of July 23, 2024, 36 States and UTs have established 53 Tele MANAS Cells and begun offering telemental health services. Over 11,76,000 calls have been answered by the helpline. Additionally, it has been suggested that the Department of Higher Education widely publicize NTMHP/Tele MANAS at the educational institutions under their purview and provide the hotline number to students so that they can call it in times of stress and difficulty. Additionally, it has been suggested that NTMHP and Tele MANAS be widely circulated and publicized in each State and UT, particularly among students enrolled in educational institutions. Additionally, all Central Government Medical Colleges, AIIMS, and Institutes of National Importance have been asked to promote Tele MANAS to students, encouraging them to call the helpline whenever they need free, private assistance (2024) [3].

In its publication "Accidental Deaths & Suicides in India (ADSI)," the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) aggregates statistical data on suicides as reported to it by the States and Union Territories. The reports that have been released are only accessible through 2022.

The National Mental Health Programme (NMHP) is being implemented nationwide by the Indian government to alleviate the burden of mental illnesses. The National Health Mission assists States and UTs with the District Mental Health Program (DMHP), a component of the NMHP, which has been approved for implementation in 767 districts. Outpatient services, assessment, counseling, psycho-social interventions, ongoing care and support for individuals with severe mental disorders, medications, outreach services, ambulance services, and more are among the facilities made available under DMHP at the Community Health Centre (CHC) and Primary Health Centre (PHC) levels. At the district level, a 10-bed inpatient facility is available in addition to the services.

Along with the, the government is also working to improve mental health services at the primary healthcare level. Over 1.73 lakh SHCs, PHCs, UPHCs,

and UHWCs have been converted to Ayushman Arogya Mandirs by the government. The Comprehensive Primary Health Care package offered at these Ayushman Arogya Mandirs now includes mental health care. Under the purview of Ayushman Bharat, operational guidelines for Mental, Neurological, and Substance Use Disorders (MNS) at Ayushman Arogya Mandirs have been published.

Along with the, MoH&FW established the "National Tele Mental Health Programme" on October 10, 2022, to increase nationwide access to high-quality mental health counseling and care services.

### 9. Techniques for Handling Academic Stress:

**Time Management:** Students can prevent last-minute cramming and lower their anxiety levels by developing a regular timetable that includes breaks. Tasks can feel less onerous if they are prioritized and divided into manageable portions.

**Mindfulness and Relaxation Techniques:** Students can learn to handle stress by engaging in mindfulness practices including yoga, meditation, and deep breathing. By improving emotional management, calming the mind, and increasing focus, these techniques make it simpler to complete academic assignments.

**Seek Assistance from Teachers and Peers:** If students are having difficulties, they should not be afraid to ask for help from their teachers or friends. Academic stress can frequently be decreased by talking about issues and gaining clarification on ideas. Peer collaboration might also make children feel less alone.

**Parental Support:** A student's mental health is greatly influenced by their parents. Pressure can be lessened by promoting candid communication between parents and students. To promote a better approach to learning, parents should put more emphasis on encouraging their kids' efforts than just the results.

**Healthy Lifestyle Choices:** To preserve both physical and mental well-being, a balanced diet, enough sleep, and frequent exercise are essential. Since ill health can make stress and anxiety worse, students should not ignore these factors.

### 10. The Support of Mental Health by Educational Institutions:

An atmosphere that promotes students' mental health can be established by schools and universities by:

**Providing Counselling Services:** Schools ought to have access to mental health specialists who can help pupils deal with stress, anxiety, and other difficulties.

**Increasing Awareness of Mental Health:** Workshops on stress reduction, mental health, and emotional well-being can give kids the skills they need to handle the demands of school.

**Redefining Success:** It means that instead of concentrating only on grades and rankings, educational institutions should support students' pursuit of knowledge and overall growth. Pressure can also be reduced by lessening the shame associated with failing.

### 11. Academic Stress

According to Toribio and Franco (2016) [4], academic stress is a systematic, adaptive psychological process that happens in learning contexts when students encounter difficulties and interpret them as unpleasant. It is an issue that is harmful in many different places.

Stress resulting from the learning process or associated activities is referred to as academic stress. It may originate from various sources, such as:

Pressure to attend class

Time spent studying, Infidelity, Numerous assignments, Obtaining test results. Important or professional choices Exam anxiety Tasks, Financial challenges, Fear of failing.

Students who experience academic stress may suffer from the following consequences:

**Mental Well-Being:** Depression, anxiety, and a decline in well-being

**Physical Well-Being:** fatigue, headaches, stomach-aches, and appetite loss

**Academic Achievement:** Subpar academic achievement Academic burnout is a psychological condition that can show itself as emotions of inadequacy, cynicism, and emotional tiredness. Students can use video games, social media scrolling, and TV watching as coping mechanisms for academic stress.

#### 11.1. Academic Stress Literature Review:

##### A. Indian Context:

**Academic Stress:** The Indian Setting Mental stress in university-level students, particularly those pursuing technical education in India, has been studied by researchers like Verma & Verma (2020) [7]. Through both online and offline methods, standardized questionnaires were used to gather data from 2,500 graduate students from different technical institutes and universities in North India. According to research, pressure, a severe workload, and a lack of family and friend support are the top factors influencing mental stress and depression in students starting technical courses.

Kumar (2016) [8], investigated a cross-sectional study that used the DASS to measure medical students' levels of stress, anxiety, and depression. to evaluate medical students' stress, anxiety, and depression levels. Medical students' levels of stress, anxiety, and depression were measured using the Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale. 213 (64.1%) of the 332 students who took part in the survey were between the ages of 17 and 20, 193 (55.0%) were female, and 215 (64.8%) were in their second trimester. Stress, anxiety, and depression rates were 109 (32.8%), 168 (50.6%), and 124 (37.3%), respectively. The majority of the pupils experienced tension, anxiety, and mild sadness. Over 30% of medical students suffer from mental health issues such as stress, anxiety, and depression.

### **B. Northeast Indian Context**

**Stress at School:** Pale & Kharbhih (2020) [9], carried out a study to determine the prevalence of adolescent depression and the factors that contribute to it. It is a mixed-method survey. Researchers employed the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) Questionnaire in 1996 for the quantitative approach and in-depth interviews for the qualitative approach. Formulating and refining quantitative results to present valid results was an exploratory way of qualitative in-depth interviews. Twenty-eight ladies and twenty-two men made up the 50 participants. According to the findings, three teenagers experience severe depression. Teenagers require assistance in comprehending the circumstances that everyone encounters, according to the findings. On the other hand, workshops, school awareness campaigns, and counseling sessions with counsellor's can all be helpful.

To evaluate the impact of academic stress on nursing students' mental health in a few Assamese nursing schools, a descriptive study was carried out. Sixty-four percent of students have considerable stress, 18 percent have severe stress, and 18 percent have mild stress, according to the data. 16% of students have strong mental health, 22.50% have poor mental health, and the majority (61.50%) have moderate mental health. The relationship between religion and academic stress is significant. The age and religious beliefs of first-year nursing students with a Bachelor of Science degree have a significant impact on their psychological well-being. At the significance level of 0.01 there is a strong correlation between academic stress and mental health. (Bora and colleagues, 2019) [10].

### **C. Global Context:**

According to the findings of a study conducted in 2022 by Barbayannis *et al.*, [11], which involved 843 students, academic stress at school or college was substantially connected with the psychological health of the students who answered the survey. A quantitative study by Ramachandiran & Dhanapal, 2018 [12], sought to understand how students in Generation Y and Z (18–25 years old) perceived stressors and their consequences. 88% of respondents acknowledged that their studies are the primary source of their stress, according to the results, while 78% reported that they experience moderate levels of stress, with 36% of them falling into the overweight/obese BMI category.

### **11.2. Parental Guidance in Handling Academic Stress:**

Children's mental health is greatly influenced by their parents, particularly about scholastic achievement. They have various options for helping their child:

**Creating Reasonable Expectations:** Although parents want the best for their kids, creating unrealistic expectations can make them feel more stressed. Parents ought to be aware of their children's potential and support

them in giving their best effort without putting unnecessary pressure on them.

**Promoting Open Communication:** Stress can be reduced by letting kids share their worries and anxieties. Emotional well-being can be enhanced by providing a secure environment where students can talk about their difficulties without fear of criticism.

**Fostering Extracurricular Interests:** Whether a youngster is interested in sports, the arts, or hobbies, it is crucial to support them. This balanced way of living promotes personal development and lessens an excessive emphasis on academics.

### **11.3. Overcoming the Fear of Failure:**

Because academic success is so important, many students have a deep-rooted dread of failing. To overcome this mentality, one must change their viewpoint:

**Rethink Failure:** Students must realize that failure is a necessary component of education. It should be viewed as a chance to develop and get better rather than as a setback.

**Put Effort Above Outcome:** Students can better handle pressure if they are reminded that persistent effort is more important than the final product. Students can maintain motivation by acknowledging progress and celebrating little victories.

**Acquiring Resilience:** It is essential to teach pupils how to overcome obstacles. Developing emotional resilience lessens the fear of failing and enables individuals to confront obstacles head-on.

### **11.4. Knowing When to Get Professional Assistance:**

Although self-care techniques are crucial for coping with academic stress, there may be occasions when expert assistance is required:

**Chronic Stress or Anxiety:** It's critical to get professional mental health assistance if stress becomes intolerable and begins to interfere with day-to-day activities.

**Signs of Depression:** Depressive symptoms may include feelings of hopelessness, melancholy, or a diminished interest in once-enjoyable activities.

**Lack of Coping Skills:** Students who struggle to manage their relationships, personal problems, or academic obligations can benefit from the assistance of a therapist or counsellor.

## **12. FINDINGS**

Educational institutions should take aggressive measures to address the widespread academic stress among students in light of the study's findings. This could entail offering academic support programs, stress management seminars, and counselling services. In order to establish a supportive learning environment for students, educators need also be aware of the elements that affect academic stress. Educational institutions can lessen the detrimental effects of academic stress on students' performance, academic accomplishment, and mental health by implementing these measures [13].

## CONCLUSION

Keeping one's physical and mental health in check requires effective stress management. Through the identification and management of stress symptoms, such as headaches, exhaustion, and irritability, people can proactively lower their stress levels.

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