

Impact of Academic Stress on Mental Health among Secondary School Students in Government Schools

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Abstract

The present study explores the impact of academic stress on the mental health of secondary school students in government schools of Indore, Madhya Pradesh. Mental health plays a vital role in students' overall development and learning outcomes, while excessive academic stress can disrupt emotional balance, concentration, and motivation, especially among adolescents. A descriptive survey design was employed with a sample of 50 government school students selected through simple random sampling. Standardized instruments—the *Academic Stress Scale* (Uday Kumar Sinha) and *Mental Health Inventory* (A.K. Singh & Alpana Sen Gupta)—were administered, and data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation, and t-test with SPSS v26. The findings revealed moderate levels of academic stress ($M = 13.88$) and mental health ($M = 67.14$). A significant negative correlation was found between academic stress and mental health ($r = -0.498$, $p = 0.0002$), indicating that higher stress levels correspond with poorer mental wellbeing. Further comparison across stress levels showed significant differences in mental-health scores ($t = 2.49$, $p = 0.016$), confirming that academic stress has a substantial adverse effect on students' mental health. The study highlights the urgent need for structured counselling, stress-management programs, and resilience-building activities within government schools to enhance students' psychological wellbeing and academic performance.

Keywords: *academic stress; mental health; secondary school students; government schools*

1. Introduction

Adolescence is a crucial phase in human growth marked by psychological, emotional, and academic transitions. During this period, students experience intense expectations from teachers, parents, and society, which may lead to academic stress. *Mental health*, as defined by Carter V. Good (1959, p. 236), is "the whole sameness of the mind." It reflects an individual's ability to maintain emotional stability, resilience, and a sense of wellbeing.

Academic stress arises when educational demands exceed a learner's ability to cope effectively, leading to anxiety, exhaustion, and reduced self-confidence. Resilience—the capacity to recover from adversity—acts as a protective factor that supports mental wellbeing. Research has shown that students with high resilience are more capable of managing stress and sustaining positive mental health (Luthar et al., 2000).

Given the challenges faced by government-school students in India, particularly limited resources and higher performance pressure, it becomes necessary to examine how academic stress influences their mental health status.

2. Objectives of the Study

1. To study the impact of academic stress on the mental health of secondary-school students in government schools.

3. Hypothesis

H₀₁: There is no significant impact of academic stress on the mental health of secondary-school students in government schools.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive survey design to explore the relationship between academic stress and mental health among secondary-school students.

4.2 Population and Sample

The population comprised students enrolled in government secondary schools of Indore city. Using simple random sampling, 50 students (26 girls and 24 boys) were selected.

4.3 Research Tools

1. Academic Stress Scale – Uday Kumar Sinha.
2. Mental Health Inventory – A.K. Singh and Alpana Sen Gupta.

Both tools have established reliability and validity for Indian populations.

4.4 Data Collection and Analysis

After obtaining institutional permission, data were collected from classroom settings. Students were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Responses were scored according to manuals, entered in SPSS v26, and analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson’s r, and t-test.

5. Results and Analysis

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of Academic Stress and Mental Health Scores

Variable	N	Mean
Academic Stress Score	50	13.88
Mental Health Score	50	67.14

Interpretation:

On the basis of Table 1, the results indicate that the sampled government-school students experience a moderate level of academic stress (M = 13.88) and demonstrate a moderate level of mental-health status (M = 67.14). This suggests that while students are not facing extreme levels of stress, their overall mental wellbeing remains average rather than optimal, reflecting a need for continued attention to emotional and psychological support in the academic environment.

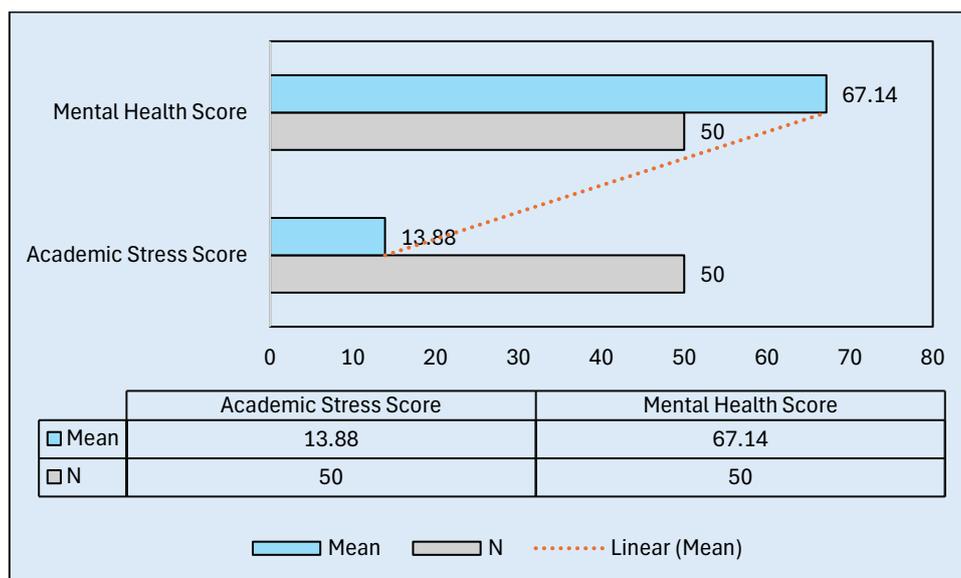


Figure 1

Descriptive Representation of Academic-Stress and Mental-Health Scores among Government-School Students

The figure displays the descriptive comparison of students' mean academic-stress and mental-health scores derived from Table 1. As shown, the mean academic-stress score ($M = 13.88$) and the mean mental-health score ($M = 67.14$) both fall within the moderate range, indicating that while the students are not under extreme stress, their mental-health status is also not at an optimal level. The pattern suggests a balanced yet vulnerable psychological state that requires attention through proactive guidance and wellbeing initiatives in schools.

Table 2**Correlation between Academic Stress and Mental Health**

Variables	N	r (Correlation Coefficient)	p-value	Result
Academic Stress & Mental Health	50	-0.498	0.0002	Significant negative correlation

Interpretation:

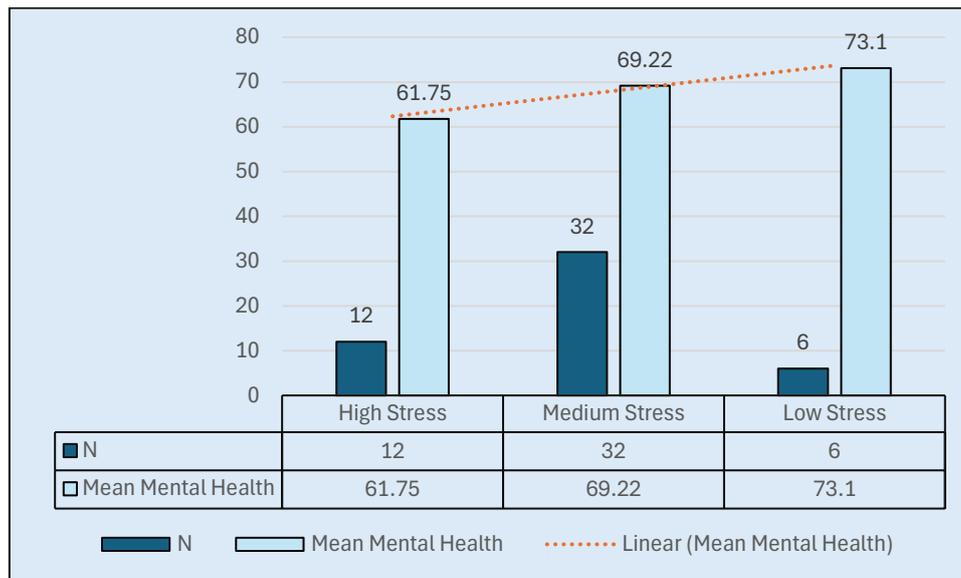
On the basis of Table 2, the findings reveal a moderate and statistically significant negative correlation ($r = -0.498$, $p = 0.0002$) between academic stress and mental health among secondary school students in government schools. This suggests that as the level of academic stress increases, students' mental health tends to deteriorate. In other words, students experiencing higher academic pressure are more likely to face emotional imbalance, anxiety, and reduced psychological wellbeing. The result clearly establishes that academic stress is an important determinant influencing students' overall mental health, emphasizing the need for supportive interventions and stress-management programs within the school environment.

Table 3**Comparison of Mental Health Based on Levels of Academic Stress**

Academic Stress Level	N	Mean Mental Health	t-value	p-value	Result
High Stress	12	61.75	2.49	0.016	Significant
Medium Stress	32	69.22			
Low Stress	6	73.1			

Interpretation:

On the basis of Table 3, a statistically significant difference in mental-health scores was found across varying levels of academic stress ($t = 2.49$, $p = 0.016$). Students experiencing high academic stress recorded the lowest mean mental-health score ($M = 61.75$), whereas those with low academic stress achieved the highest mean mental-health score ($M = 73.10$). This pattern demonstrates that mental health declines as academic stress intensifies. The result underscores the inverse relationship between stress and psychological wellbeing and highlights the importance of stress-management strategies to maintain healthy emotional functioning among government-school students.

**Figure 1**

Comparison of Mean Mental-Health Scores Across Levels of Academic Stress

The figure illustrates the variation in mean mental-health scores among students experiencing high, medium, and low levels of academic stress. Students with high academic stress ($M = 61.75$) recorded the lowest mean mental-health score, followed by those with medium stress ($M = 69.22$) and low stress ($M = 73.10$). The dotted trend line shows a positive linear pattern, indicating that mental-health scores increase as academic stress decreases ($t = 2.49, p = 0.016$).

6. Discussion

Findings reveal that academic stress is a major predictor of students' mental wellbeing. The negative correlation between stress and mental health suggests that as students' academic pressures increase, their emotional stability and psychological health decline. This result aligns with previous findings by Sharma (2017) and Singh & Chadha (2006), who reported similar trends among adolescents.

Government-school students, often facing larger class sizes and limited counselling services, may lack coping mechanisms. Introducing mindfulness programs, peer-support groups, and resilience-based interventions could mitigate the harmful effects of stress on mental health.

The study thus rejects the null hypothesis and confirms that academic stress significantly impacts the mental health of government-school students.

7. Conclusion

The research concludes that excessive academic stress adversely affects the mental health of secondary-school students in government institutions. Students experiencing higher levels of stress show poorer emotional balance and life satisfaction. It is recommended that schools implement regular mental-health screenings, guidance sessions, and stress-management workshops. Teachers and parents should work collaboratively to build supportive environments that foster resilience and holistic wellbeing.

8. Limitations and Future Scope

- The sample size was limited to 50 students from Indore; hence, findings cannot be generalized.
- Future studies may use larger samples and include private schools for comparative analysis.
- Longitudinal and intervention-based designs can better establish causality.

9. Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the Institutional Ethics Committee of Oriental University, Indore (Approval No. OUEd-2025-07). Written parental consent and student assent were collected. Data confidentiality was maintained.

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