

Comparison of academic stress between government and private school higher secondary students

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ABSTRACT

Background: Academic stress is the feeling of anxiety or apprehension on the academic activities. It can lead to negative impact on learning capacity, academic performance, education and employment attainment. **Objective:** The objective of the study was to assess and compare the level of academic stress between the government and private school higher secondary school students. **Methods:** Non-experimental cross sectional research design was adopted with 100 participants who were selected by cluster sampling technique at selected schools. The tool used for the study was demographic variables and perceived stress scale to assess the level of stress. **Results:** Out of 50 participants from government school, 14(28%) had low level of stress, 23 (46%) had moderate level and 13 (26%) had high level of stress whereas in out of 50 private school students four (8%) had low level of stress, 19(38%) had moderate level and 17(54%) had high level of stress. **Conclusion:** The study findings concluded that there is high level of stress found among students studying in both the schools and high percentage was observed in private school students. Periodical student counseling including career guidance, stress management strategies can be incorporated in the curriculum to cope up with stressful events.

Keywords: Academic Stress, Government School, Higher Secondary School, Private School, Stress, Students

Stress is the body's physical, chemical, and emotional reaction to an overwhelming, confusing, or exciting situation. According to the cognitive-transactional model of stress, stress is the dynamic relationship between an individual and the environment in which a stimulus disturbs an individual's homeostasis, causing him/her to respond to the situation with all available resources (Folkman S, 1984). Students of all the ages can experience stress due to various both positive and negative reasons and common among school going students especially higher secondary school students. One amongst is the academic stress which is the feeling of anxiety or apprehension over one's performance in the academic activities. Academic stress can be defined as any stress associated with school (Polo AJ et al, 1996).

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Stress that occurs in an academic environment can affect students as much as teachers, at any educational level (Álvarez R, 2000). Academic stress involves mental distress regarding anticipated academic challenges or failure or even an awareness of the possibility of academic failure (Verma S & Gupta J, 1990). The World Health Organisation (1996) stated that students must be healthy and emotionally secure to fully participate in education (Rueger, S Y, Malecki C K, 2011).

Higher secondary period is very crucial because it determines the future career and it is very critical period with full of changes, and it must be carefully managed (Rueger, S Y, Malecki C K, 2011; Roca Chiapas,2008). The academic stress may arise from the teachers to complete the assignment on time, coaching classes, no week end holidays, extra working hours, writing repeated exams, worrying about scoring high grades, appearing for competitive examination to seek higher studies in well-established university. Kouzma and Kennedy also reported that school-related situations such as tests, grades, studying, self-imposed need to succeed are the main sources of stress for high school students. Moreover the stress may also come from parents, relatives, neighbours, friends and society.

The level of the stress also depends how they respond to it, their age, temperament, family environment as well school where the students are studying also determines. High levels of academic stress result in poor outcomes in the areas of exercise, nutrition, substance use, self-care (Weidner et al, 1996) and uncomfortable situation that affect the sense of well-being and quality of life (Jennings, 2009). The unresolved academic, stress leads to negative impact on students' learning capacity, academic performance, education and employment attainment, sleep quality and quantity, physical health, mental health and substance use outcomes. Stress relieving strategies can be practices to prevent negative outcomes associated with stress, such as suicide (Nath Y, 2012) or depression and anxiety (Supe AN, 1998), and to improve the coping ability of the students and thereby increase the quality of life (Perales A et al, 2003). Hence the study was conducted to assess and compare the level of school related stress among the higher secondary school students between the government and private school.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

Non experimental cross sectional study was conducted to compare the level of school related stress after obtained the formal permission from the concerned schools. Totally 100 participants who met the inclusion criteria were selected by cluster sampling technique among which 50 from Government Higher Secondary School and 50 participants were selected from Private Higher Secondary School. The students who were absent and underwent the treatment for stress were excluded from the study. Explained the study in detail and obtained informed consent from both assents as well parent. After assuring the confidentiality collected socio demographic variables and assessed the school related stress by using Perceived stress scale during leisure time after the class hours. Data were collected by self-administered method. After distributed the tool asked the participants to give the response by recollecting the experiences in past ne one month of their lives. The perceived scale consist of 10 questions and point was given as 0 - never, 1- almost never, 2 – sometimes, 3 – fairly often and 4 – very often. Total score was calculated by adding all response of each item of individual participant. The score ranges from zero to 40 with high score indicating higher perceived stress and it is interpreted as 0 – 13 would be considered as low stress, 14 - 26 considered as moderate stress and 27- 40 would be considered as high perceived stress. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the study. The collected data prepared for analysis using Microsoft excel and were analyzed by using

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descriptive and inferential statistics. P values less than 0.05 were considered statistically significant.

RESULTS

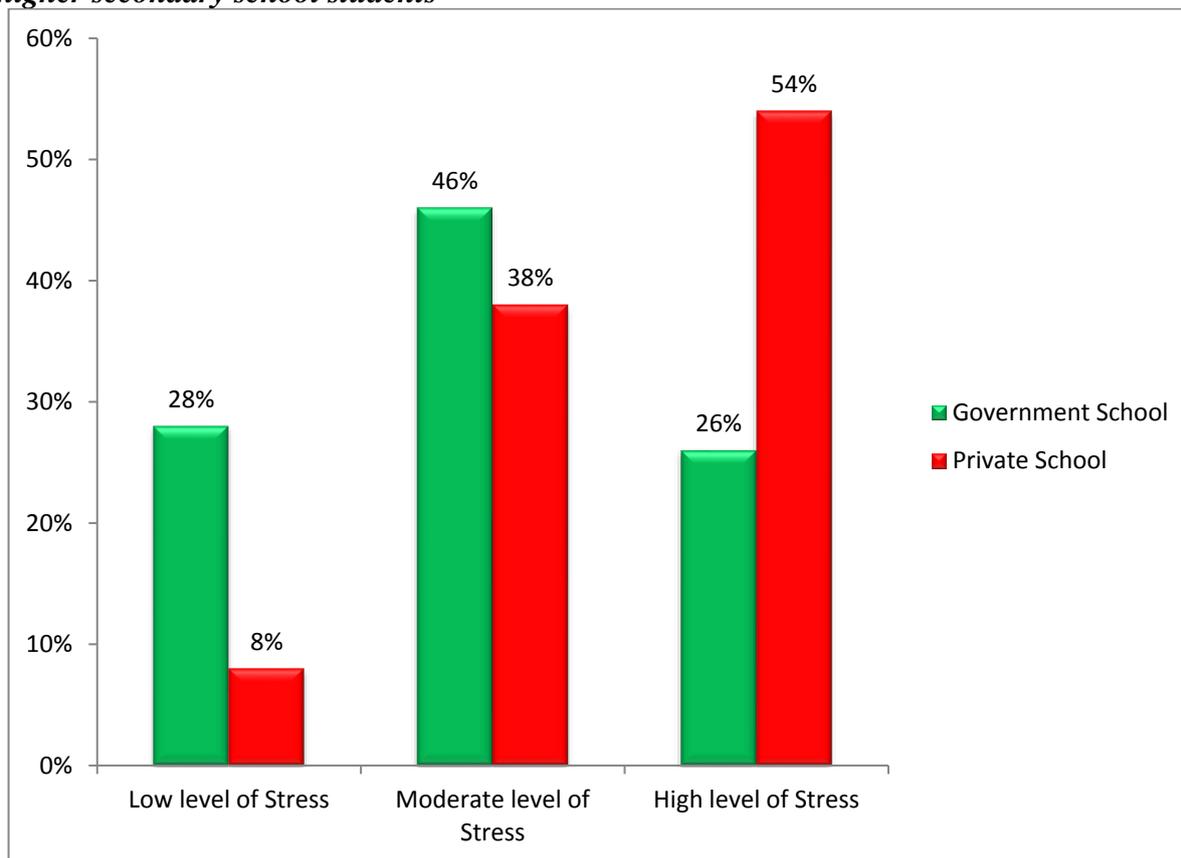
Table 1: Frequency and percentage distribution of participants according to their demographic variables.

S.No	Demographic Variable	Government School Students		Private School Students	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Age				
	16 years	22	44%	17	34%
	17 years	28	56%	33	66%
2.	Gender				
	Male	20	40%	22	44%
	Female	30	60%	28	56%
3.	Standard of study				
	11 th Standard	20	40%	18	36%
	12 th Standard	30	60%	32	64%
4.	Group				
	Biology & Mathematics	16	32%	15	30%
	Mathematics & Computer	17	34%	20	40%
	Bio Science	17	34%	15	30%
5.	Residence				
	Rural	23	46%	7	14%
	Urban	27	54%	43	86%
6.	Parent's Education				
	Graduation and less than	32	64%	19	38%
	Post-graduation and above	18	36%	31	62%
7.	Parent's Occupation				
	Government employee	14	28%	18	36%
	Private employee	26	52%	27	54%
	Daily wages	10	20%	5	10%

Table I reveals the distribution of demographic variables of 100 participants. Majority of the students were female with the age of 17 years and doing 12th standard. Around 40% belongs to mathematics and computer sciences group and majority 86% from private school students residing in urban area and their parent's educational status are postgraduates and above. More than 50% of the parents are private employee in both the groups.

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Figure-I: Comparison of level of school related stress between government and private higher secondary school students



Out of 50 participants from government school, 14(28%) had low level of stress, 23 (46%) had moderate level and 13 (26%) had high level of stress whereas in out of 50 private school students four (8%) had low level of stress, 19(38%) had moderate level and 17(54%) had high level of stress as depicted in figure – I.

Table II. Mean and Standard Deviation of Level of school related stress between government and private higher secondary school students (n=100)

Level of Stress	Government School		Private School	
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
Low level of Stress	8.7	1.24	10.4	1.35
Moderate level of Stress	23.6	2.13	24.7	1.46
High level of Stress	35.4	1.42	36.6	2.31
Over all	29.6	2.21	32.5	2.56

The mean value of low level of stress was 8.7 with 1.24 standard deviation, moderate level of stress mean was 23.6 with 2.13 standard deviation and high level of stress mean was 35.4 with 2.21 standard deviation. The mean and standard deviation of low, moderate and high level of stress was 10.4±1.35, 24.7±1.46 and 36.6±2.31 respectively in Private school higher secondary school students. The overall mean and standard deviation of both the group was 29.6±2.21 and 32.5±2.56 as shown in Table II.

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Table III. Association between the level of Stress and selected demographic variables of Higher Secondary School Students in Government and Private School

Higher Secondary School Students in Government School								
S.No	Demographic Variable	Low Level		Moderate level		High level		Chi-sqaure
		No	%	No	%	No	%	
1	Group of Study							
	Biology & Mathematics	4	8%	6	12%	2	4%	X ² =6.1143 Df=4 P=0.47022 (S)
	Mathematics & Computer	9	18%	5	10%	3	6%	
	Bio Science	10	20%	5	10%	2	4%	
Higher Secondary School Students in Private School								
2	Age							
	16 years	3	6%	9	18%	8	16%	X ² =11.7046 df=2 P=0.0287 (S)
	17 years	5	10%	13	26%	15	30%	
3	Residence							
	Rural	2	4%	2	4%	3	6%	X ² =6.8858 df=2 P=0.031412 (S)
	Urban	8	16%	15	30%	20	40%	

Chi square test reveals that there is a significant association between the level of stress and the selected demographic variables of group of study at the level of $p < 0.05$ in government school students and with the age group and residence in Private school students.

DISCUSSION

Academic stress is a mental distress with respect to some anticipated frustration associated with academic failure or even awareness of the possibility of such failure (Gupta and Khan, 1987). Ongoing academic stress leads to students being unable to perform best in examinations. The mental health of students, especially in terms of academic stress and its impact has become a serious issue. Students were considered to be the future pillars who take the responsibilities to take our country. Hence the investigators decided to analysis the academic stress among higher secondary students. The current study findings found that high level stress in both the groups and highest percentage observed in private school students. The findings of the current study consistent with the study conducted by Sibnath Deb et al, and stated nearly two-thirds (63.5%) of the students reported stress due to academic pressure with no significant differences across gender, age, grade, and several other personal factors (14). In present study 54% of the students perceives high level of stress and was associated with age, residence and group of the study such bio-science, bio-maths & computer science-maths. This finding is matched with earliest survey report by the Orgnization of Economics Co-operation and Development involving 72 countries and consisting of 540,000 student respondents aged 15–16 years and found that 55% of students feel very anxious about school testing, even when they are well prepared and 37% of students reported feeling very tense when studying, with girls consistently reporting greater anxiety relating to schoolwork compared to boys (15). Similarly another study conducted by Anupama K and Sarada D who revealed that the adolescent girls and boys perceived high (57.9%) to very high (40%) levels of academic stress and there was significant difference between boys and girls in their

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academic stress in cognitive domain (16). However current study lacks in associate the domains of stress separately. The study conducted by Akeela and Ashok who reported that that nature of school emerged as a significant factor in the experience of stress and students belonging to Government schools were experiencing more stress (17). This finding is contrast with the current study finding so further study can be conducted to explore the causes of stress. A systematic review of 13 studies by Ribeiro et al showed that in individuals undertaking higher education, self-reported levels of stress are associated with poorer quality of life and well-being (18). In current study did not analyse extensively the impact of the stress on physical and mental well-being.

Limitations & Recommendations

The study finding is limited only to the bio-science, bio-maths and maths-computer science group students as well as compare only the matriculation board. Hence it is recommended to involve the arts group students and students studying in Samacheer and CBSE syllabus. The present study restricted to assess the other variables like the duration of study hours, frequency of conducting tests, and chances to participate in extracurricular & co-curricular activities.

CONCLUSION

The study findings concluded that there is high level of stress found among students studying in both the schools and high percentage was observed in private school students. Further study can be done to explore the causes of stress and its related factors. Periodical student counselling including career guidance, stress management strategies can be incorporated in the curriculum to make the students to cope up with the stressful situations. Clinical psychologist may be appointed in all the schools and teachers also trained to manage the students with stress by adopting stress relieving measures.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflict of interest.

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