

Exploring the Relationship of Academic Stress with Resilience and Self-concept of School Students and Undergraduates

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the present study was to explore the relationship of academic stress with resilience and self concept among school students (11th and 12th class only) and undergraduates. Academic stress refers to the body's response to academic-related demands which exceeds a student's adaptive capabilities. Self-concept is an individual's perception of it's behavior, abilities, and unique characteristics. Resilience is the psychological quality that allows people to be knocked down by the adversities of life and come back as strong as before. It was hypothesized that there would be a significant relationship of academic stress with self-concept and resilience among school students and undergraduates and also that there will be a significant difference between school and undergraduate students on the measures of academic stress, self concept and resilience. A two-group design was followed as data was collected from school students (11th and 12th class only) and undergraduates using non-probability sampling techniques. Results were analysed using descriptive (means and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (t-test and correlation). A semi-structured interview method was also used to collect more in-depth data from 10 school students and 10 undergraduates. This data was then further thematically analyzed. Statistical results indicated that undergraduates are high on constructs of academic stress, self-concept and resilience. The relationship of academic stress with the self-concept and resilience of school students and undergraduates has been found to be non significant and negatively low. Thematic analysis found that participants' academic stress is a significant predictor of school students and undergraduates self-concept and resilience, with various common factors found common between school students and undergraduates responses with respect to academic stress, self-concept and resilience and various sources of academic stress identified for both school students and undergraduate participants. Future suggestions and limitations were also suggested along with various strategies to help improve student's overall life quality.

Keywords: *Academic stress, resilience, Self-concept, School students (11th and 12th class only), Undergraduates*

Academic stress
Stress refers to the body's nonspecific response to environmental demands. It is not just a stimulus or a response but a process by which individuals perceive and cope

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Received: October 25, 2021; Revision Received: December 25, 2021; Accepted: December 28, 2021

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with the threats and challenges by the environment. Although small amounts of stress are normal and can help individuals to be more active and productive (eustress) but very high levels of stress experienced over a long time period may cause significant mental and physical problems. Poor sleeping habits, academic pressure, busy routine and poor eating habits are some of the factors that cause stress among students. Students who don't have healthy sleeping patterns are more likely to feel stressed than students who get plenty of sleep (National Sleep Foundation). As sleep allows a student's body and brain to recharge it helps keep the immune system strong thus, inadequate amounts of sleep can make an individual more aggressive along with limiting their ability to learn, concentrate and solve problems. According to Wendy A. Patterson education professionals view the academic standards of schools and teachers as major causes of student's increased stress. Hence, academic pressure imposed by parents, teachers and peers makes an individual engage in a competitive race with oneself and others, trying to prove one's worth which poses a threat for student's mental and physical health. However, students who do not experience increased homework load may experience stress due to overscheduling and overstimulation. Moreover, poor nutrition and unhealthy eating habits (foods high in fat, caffeine, sugar and refined carbohydrates; sodas, energy drinks, donuts, candy bars, processed snack foods, white bread and french fries) can increase a student's stress level. Hence, a healthy diet that helps to reduce stress (foods low in fat and high in fiber and complex carbohydrates; fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts and lean proteins) should be included in every student's diet. Hans Selye gave an influential model named General Adaptation Syndrome that helps identify the physiological changes that an individual's body experiences when exposed to stress. This model is divided into 3 stages namely; "Alarm Reaction stage" indicates the awareness of stressor by the individual when the body experiences initial symptoms and prepares itself for fight-or-flight response. Then comes the "Resistance stage" wherein an individual either attacks the stressor (fight) or protects oneself (flight) with signs such as irritability, frustration and poor concentration. The last stage i.e. "Exhaustion stage" occurs due to prolonged stress which drains the body's resources so much that the body has no strength left to fight with signs of burnout, fatigue, anxiety, low stress tolerance and even depression. The human body can experience two different types of stress i.e. positive (eustress) such as being extremely motivated to get good marks but this stress becomes negative (distress) when an individual is not able to concentrate on studies due to fear of failure. Distress can lead to physical symptoms such as headaches, upset stomach, elevated blood pressure, chest pain, and sleeping problems. Therefore, academic stress can be defined as the body's response to academic-related demands which exceed students' adaptive capabilities. It has been estimated that 10–30% of students experience some degree of academic stress during their academic career and that academic stress among students enrolled in highly academic standards universities has a major impact. According to the American College Health Association (2006) survey of college students, academic stress was found to be a health obstacle to college student's academic performance as out of the 97,357 college students who participated in the survey, 32% reported that academic stress had resulted in an incomplete, dropped course or a lower grade. Most commonly reported stressors in the academic environment are related to oral presentations, academic overload, fear of failure, lack of time to meet commitments and taking examinations. Research by Al-Ayadhi showed that academic stress induces significant neurohormonal changes at the hypothalamic–pituitary–adrenocortical axis with a marked increment of stress hormones such as ACTH and cortisol has been found in first- and second-year Saudi medical students during an academic stressful situation. Highly competitive educational environment is another academic stress inducing factor for students. A study by Gilbert and colleagues

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(2009) suggested that elevated competitive behavior or people feeling that one has become too inferior may increase an individual's vulnerability to depression, anxiety and stress. Another study by Feld and colleagues (2011) investigated the effect of stress on high-pressure college preparatory school students and reported high prevalences of harmful physical and psychological correlates of stress and related unhealthy behaviors, such as widespread and chronic sleep deprivation.

Self-concept

An individual's identity lies in one's sense of 'self' which can be described as 'object' and also as 'subject'. Sense of 'self' gradually develops and changes as a result of various factors experienced by an individual during growth and development till maturity despite one's social, religious, cultural, and ethnic diversity. William James (1890) developed the philosophy of the 'self' and development of the 'self' into a cohesive theory. He demonstrated the 'self' as the core of the personality pattern which provides unity and he also hypothesized that there is a hierarchical order of the self starting with the 'material self', 'social self' and the 'spiritual self' (Bracken, 1996). The self concept shapes how an individual views one's relations with the world and reflects one's overall quality of being. Hence, the perception of oneself influences a person's identity, body image, self-esteem, and role in society. Raimy (1943) was the first person to define the self-concept, "the self concept is the more or less organized perceptual object resulting from present and past self observation i.e., what a person believes about oneself". Self-concept refers to an individual's perception of their behavior, abilities and unique characteristics or "a mental picture of who you are as a person". For example, beliefs such as "I am a good daughter" or "I am a hardworking person" are part of an overall self-concept. Self-concept is more malleable when people are younger and still in the process of self-discovery and identity formation however as people age, self-perceptions become more detailed and organized as people form a better idea of who they are and what is important to them. The "individual self" consists of attributes and personality traits which differentiate an individual from other individuals whereas, the "relational self" is defined by an individual's relationship with significant others and the collective self reflects an individual's membership in social groups. Lewis (1990) suggested that development of self concept has two aspects; "The Existential Self" i.e. the child begins to realize that one has a separate entity from others which continues to exist over time and space. Awareness of the existential self begins at an early age and arises as a result of a child's relation with the world. However, the "Categorical Self" forms when a child realizes it's existence as a separate experiencing being, becoming aware of oneself being an object in the world having properties such as age, gender, size or skill. With time children begin to compare their abilities, academic performance, and social status to their peers, seek acceptance and approval to feel included and positive about oneself. Thus, parents, teachers, and peers directly influence children's feelings, views, and self concept. During adolescence, they become more dependent on peer groups and begin formulating their self-concept and self-understanding based on others' influences (Berger, 2001). Therefore, parents play a key role in the development of a healthy self concept during adolescence it is highly important for them to be supportive and involved so that adolescents are able to be themselves and not get burdened by the pressure of being someone they don't want to and have a secure bond to share feelings and thoughts with.

Resilience

Resilience refers to the psychological quality that allows people to deal with the adversities of life and come back as strong as before. Highly resilient people find a way to change

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course, emotionally heal and continue moving towards achieving their goals. Resilience is not a trait but flexibility, adaptability and perseverance that helps people become resilient by changing certain thoughts and behaviors. Research shows that students who believe that both intellectual abilities and social attributes can be developed show a lower stress response to adversity and improved performance. Developing resilience is complex and personal as it involves a combination of inner strengths and outer resources. Resilience helps people build emotional strength to cope with trauma, adversity, and hardship. Thus, resilient people utilize their resources, strengths and skills to overcome challenges and work through setbacks. Whereas, people who lack resilience are more likely to feel overwhelmed/helpless and rely on unhealthy coping strategies. Although resilient people do experience stress, setbacks, and difficult emotions, but they make use of their strengths and seek help from support systems to overcome challenges and work through problems. Therefore, resilience empowers individuals to accept and adapt to situations and move forward.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Sibnath Deb, Esben Strodl and Jiandong Sun (2012) did research on “Academic-related stress among private secondary school students in India” with a purpose to examine the prevalence of academic stress and exam anxiety among private secondary school students in India and the associations with socio-economic and study-related factors. 400 adolescent participants were selected using a multi-stage sampling technique and were assessed using a study-specific questionnaire. Findings revealed that 35 and 37 percent reported high or very high levels of academic stress and exam anxiety respectively. Students engaged in extracurricular activities were more likely to report exam anxiety than those who did not.

Marwan Zaid Bataineh (2013) conducted research on “Academic stress among undergraduate students: the case of education faculty at King Saud University” to investigate the academic stressors experienced by the students at university. Data was collected through a self-administered questionnaire and was analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation, and analysis of variance (ANOVA). Results showed that academic overloads, course awkwardness, inadequate time to study, workload every semester, exams awkward, low motivation, and high family expectations were driving moderate stress among students. It was also found that fear of failure is the major source of stress among undergraduate students. Moreover, the study found that there was a positive correlation between religiosity sources and academic stress. The study also found that there were no significant differences in academic stress among students with different levels of study and specializations.

Dr. P. Suresh Prabu (2015) conducted research on “A study on Academic Stress among Higher Secondary Students” with a purpose to find out the level of academic stress among higher secondary students. The present study revealed that the higher secondary students are having moderate level of academic stress and irrespective of sub samples of the higher secondary students are having moderate level of academic stress. The male student's academic stress is higher than female students. The urban student's academic stress is higher than rural students. The Government school student's academic stress is less than private school students. The science subject student's academic stress is higher than arts student. The students whose parent's education as literacy level academic stress is higher than their counterpart.

Subramani and Kadhiravan (2017) conducted a research “Academic Stress and Mental Health among Students” indicating the link between academic stress and mental health

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among students. Findings revealed that that academic stress and mental health are correlated and that students are cramped with the academic structure, parents and schools pressurize the students for the higher grades that disheartens the students. The students are mentally healthy when they perform constructively in the academic forums. Significant difference in mental health of students from private and government schools was found.

Kaur (2014) conducted a research on “Impact of Academic Stress on Mental Health: A Study of School going Adolescents” and acknowledged that mental health of teenagers gets affected due to the academic stress. Girls experiencing academic stress were found to have poor mental health as compared to the boys. This was based on the study that parents at times put pressure and strain on students that leads to deteriorated mental health.

Bataineh (2013) conducted research on “Academic stress among undergraduate students: the case of education faculty at King Saud University” and measured the academic stressors experienced by students at university. The results showed that unreasonable academic overload, not enough time to study due to the vast course content being covered, fear of failure, high family expectations and low motivation levels are some of the reasons for students' stress without any significant difference found amongst the students from different specializations.

Khan and Kausar (2013) conducted a research on “Effect of Perceived Academic Stress on Students' Performance” and concluded that stress impacts academic performance in a negative way without any significant difference on the basis of gender. Hence, it was suggested that studying regularly is important as it helps reduce the academic pressure and helps them fulfill their goals.

Busari (2012) conducted a research on “Evaluating the Relationship between Gender, Age, Depression and Academic Performance among Secondary School Students” and found that stress led to depression among secondary school students with effect on academic achievement. Hence, it was suggested that introduction to preventive measures, teaching life skills and other therapeutic techniques should be taken into serious consideration.

Nandamuri and Gowthami (2011) conducted a research on “Sources of Academic Stress-A Study on Management Students” to study the stress among students of professional studies and claimed that curriculum and instructions parameters were most responsible for stress with 86 percent, followed by 63 percent for placement related issues, assessment and team work issues accounted for 41 percent and 24 percent respectively. The study also identified various micro issues responsible for stress, and listed twelve sub issues related to curriculum and instruction. Once the sub issues of each parameter are identified it also provided improved vision to the academic administrators for initiating efforts to reduce the gravity of academic stress.

McKean et al. (2000) conducted a research on “College Students Academic Stress and Its relation to Their Anxiety, Time Management, and Leisure Satisfaction” and argued that undergraduate students experience higher stress at expected times in each semester. Academic engagements, financial pressures and lack of time management skills were found to increase stress, also, excessive stress was found to affect well being, emotional attitude and academic performance.

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Acosta-Gómez, Roca-Chiapas, Zavala-Bervena, Cisneros, Pérez, Rodrigues & Novack (2018) conducted a research on “Stress in High School Students: A Descriptive Study” to determine the general level of stress among high school students, identify the students main sources of stress, identify the students main responses to stress and to determine if students have protections against or risk factors for stress using Nowack’s Stress Profile. It was found that most of the students reported normal (54%) or lower (39%) stress levels, but women reported significantly higher stress levels than men ($p < 0.05$), with main sources of stress being examinations, choosing a career path, and family troubles. The students main responses to stress were listening to music, talking with someone about the problem, and exercise.

Agung, Suryani and Hernawaty (2018) conducted research on “Relationship between Academic Stress, Family and Peer Attachment with Internet Addiction in Adolescents” using a quantitative correlational design with a cross-sectional approach. Results indicated correlations between academic stress, family and peer attachment to internet addiction. It was also found that family attachment has a significant influence with internet addiction in high school adolescents.

Jane Roli (2018) conducted a research on “Academic Stress, Resilience, Peer Relation, and Teacher Support as Predictors of Undergraduates’ Academic Confidence” and concluded that an increase in undergraduate’s wellbeing through adequate teacher support, positive peer relation and academic stress may enhance academic resilience and promote meaningful and fulfilled life academically. Thus, the findings of this study indicated that academic stress, resilience, peer relation and teacher support are significant predictors of undergraduate’s academic confidence.

Storer, Cychosz and Lickuder (2006) conducted research that revealed that academic resilience had positive connections with arranging, control, self-efficacy, perseverance and low nervousness. Furthermore, academic resilience anticipated three instructive results: self-esteem, support, and satisfaction in school.

Mathur and Sharma (2015) conducted a research on “Academic stress in relation with optimism and resilience” with an aim to understand the relationship of academic stress with certain positive variables like optimism and resilience. It was found that academic stress correlated negatively with optimism and resilience and both the variables significantly predicted academic stress.

Research by Ayesha Khan and Shah Alam (2015) on “Academic Stress and Self Concept of High School Students” aimed to understand the relationship between academic stress and self-concept of high school students and examined the difference between government and private high school students on self-concept and academic stress. The study found statistically significant negative correlation between academic stress and self-concept as private school students were found to be significantly better on moral self concept and temperamental self-concept with

private and government high school students being significantly different only on one dimension of academic stress i.e., inadequate academic environment in the college.

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Hussain and Thakur (2019) conducted a research on “Association between resilience, mindfulness and academic stress among university students” with an aim to know the relationship between resilience, mindfulness and academic stress among male and female university students. Results of the study revealed that resilience and mindfulness are highly correlated among male and female students, resilience and academic stress are highly negatively correlated among male and female students and academic stress and mindfulness are highly negatively correlated.

Wuthrich and colleagues (2020) conducted a research on “Academic Stress in the Final Years of School: A Systematic Literature Review” with an aim to examine the nature of distress in students in their final two years of secondary school and found that female gender and anxiety proneness were consistently associated with increased distress whereas, freedom from negative cognitions to be associated with reduced distress. There was evidence that individual characteristics such as perfectionism, avoidance, coping, self-efficacy, resilience and lifestyle patterns of sleep, homework, school, family and peer connectedness were associated with distress.

Huan and colleagues (2008) conducted a research on “The impact of adolescent concerns on their academic stress” with an aim to examine the contributing role of the different aspects of adolescent concerns on the academic stress of youths in Singapore and examined four different aspects of adolescent concerns namely family, personal, peer and school concerns and also explored gender differences in terms of these predictions and the academic stress experienced by the adolescents. It was found that for the girls, school-related concerns were predictive of academic stress arising from other expectations, they obtained significantly higher scores on the Academic Expectations Stress Inventory than boys did.

Gonzalez and colleagues (2015) conducted a research on “Relationships between academic stress, social support, optimism-pessimism and self-esteem in college students” with an aim to analyze how optimism, self-esteem and social support help to predict academic stress. It was found that emotional manifestations of stress are predicted by optimism and pessimism, however self-esteem was not significantly related to the constructs.

Snehaja and Mani (2016) conducted a research on “Analyzing the sources of academic stress among the undergraduate medical college students” with an aim to determine the prevalence and the factors associated with stress among undergraduate medical students and found overall stress level mean for females to be higher than that of males. It was also found that fear of failure was a major contributor to stress along with limited time for recreation and home-sickness to be major non-academic sources of stress.

Deb and colleagues (2015) conducted a research on “Academic stress, parental pressure, anxiety and mental health among indian high school students” with an aim to investigate academic stress and mental health of indian high school students and the associations between various psychosocial factors and academic stress. It was found that Nearly two-thirds of the students reported stress due to academic pressure without any significant differences across gender, age, grade and several other personal factors. About two-thirds of the students reported feeling pressure from their parents for better academic performance. The degree of parental pressure experienced differed significantly across the educational levels of the parents, mother’s occupation, number of private tutors, and academic performance. In particular, children of fathers possessing a lower education level (non-

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graduates) were found to be more likely to perceive pressure for better academic performance. About one-thirds of the students were symptomatic of psychiatric caseness and 81.6% reported examination-related anxiety. Academic stress was positively correlated with parental pressure and psychiatric problems while examination-related anxiety also was positively related to psychiatric problems. Thus, it was seen that academic stress is a serious issue which affects nearly two thirds of senior high school students in Kolkata.

Moawad (2020) conducted a research on “Online Learning during the COVID- 19 Pandemic and Academic Stress in University Students”with an aim to identify the academic stressors by analysing the worries and fears that students at the College of Education (King Saud University) are experiencing during the time of COVID-19 and found that the issue with the highest percentage of stress among students is their uncertainty over the end of semester exams and assessments.

Raj and Fatima (2020) conducted a research on “Stress in Students after Lockdown Due to COVID-19 Threat and the Effects of Attending Online Classes” with an aim to know student's mental condition and their problems with respect to online classes and found that 34.4% of students have felt stressed sometimes, 22.6% of students felt stressed often and 15.1% of students are always in stress due to the threat of coronavirus. Overall, 51.4% of students are stressed in this condition of threat.69.8% of students are stressed about their studies. 78.5% of students are not comfortable with online classes. Hence, it was concluded that most of the students are mentally stressed in this condition of threat, most of the students are worried about their study and are not satisfied with the classes conducted online.

Academics is an important aspect of every student’s life and is highly influential in terms of an individual’s development, skills, personality, happiness, view of oneself, physical and mental health, attitude, perceptions and coping abilities. This impact of academics can be both positive and negative. Whereas, a positive impact helps build career and become intellectual, a negative impact can lead to disturbances in an individual’s life aspects such as reduced confidence, low self-esteem, parental pressure and unsatisfying peer relationships, etc,. Academic stress is influenced by a vast majority of factors such as teacher’s interaction, parent’s involvement, peer relationships, one’s relationship with oneself and personality, etc,. Therefore, it is important to study the impact that academic stress has on self-concept and resilience of adolescents majorly in last years of school (11th and 12th) and graduation because these years play a very important role in determining the career aspects of students and hence they expose them to various challenges and opportunities in which they may/may not succeed. Self-concept and resilience are two important constructs chosen for the present study because they constitute a vast portion of a student's personality by determining what they think and believe about themselves and the kind of abilities they have to cope with difficult situations. Also, the current scenario of covid-19 pandemic has exposed students to online education which further is believed to have a wide variety of positive and negative impacts on student’s life and overall personality. Therefore, conducting a research keeping in mind all these points will help to identify the impact that academic stress has on self-concept and resilience of school students and undergraduates further helping to identify how/what measures can be taken on the part of education system, parents, students and government to help students reduce or manage their stress related to their academics and educational responsibilities.

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Aim: The aim of the present study was to explore the relationship of academic stress with resilience and self concept among school students (11th and 12th class only) and undergraduates.

Objectives

1. To determine the relationship between academic stress and self-concept of school students.
2. To determine the relationship between academic stress and self-concept of undergraduates.
3. To determine the relationship between academic stress and resilience of school students.
4. To determine the relationship between academic stress and resilience of undergraduates.
5. To investigate the difference between school and undergraduate students on academic stress, self concept and resilience.
6. To identify the factors influencing academic stress of school and undergraduate students.

Hypothesis

1. There will be a significant relationship between academic stress and self-concept of school students.
2. There will be a significant relationship between academic stress and self-concept of undergraduates.
3. There will be a significant relationship between academic stress and resilience of school students.
4. There will be a significant relationship between academic stress and resilience of undergraduates.
5. There will be a significant difference between school and undergraduate students on academic stress, self concept and resilience.

METHODOLOGY

Sampling

In the present research, the sample comprised 174 students. Out of 174 students 87 were from school and the other 87 were from college. The data for the present study was collected using non-probability (purposive, convenience and snowball) sampling techniques. The sample of the present study were school students (11th and 12th class only) and undergraduates which consists of both boys and girls, students living in India and also studying either in private or government school/college.

Design

A two-group design i.e., School students (11th and 12th class only) and undergraduates were used in the present study. The representation of the design is given below:

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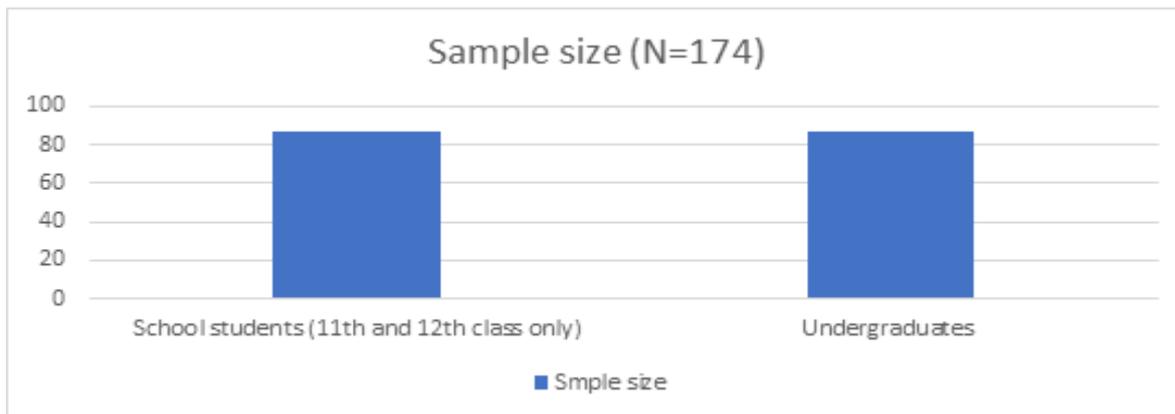


Fig 1: The above graph shows that the total sample size is 174 with school students (11th and 12th class only) and undergraduate participants being 87 each.

Description of tools

- **Academic stress scale:** This scale was originally developed by Kim (1970) and was adapted for Indian population by Rajendran and Kaliappan (1990). It comprises 40 items, each having five alternatives varying from the response 'No Stress' to 'Extreme Stress'. Each response carries a score of '0', '1', '2', '3' and '4' respectively. All the scores are to be added together. The items are classified into five areas (personal inadequacy, fear of failure, interpersonal difficulties with teachers, teaching methods/teacher-pupil relationship and inadequate study facilities) each comprising eight questions. The test-retest correlation of 50 students with an interval of 25 days has been found to be 0.82. High score represents high academic stress whereas a low score represents low academic stress.
- **The Resilience Scale:** This scale was Wagnild and Young (1993), comprising 25 items, measuring what is going right versus what is going wrong in your life and strengths rather than limitations. Cronbach's alpha reliability ranges from .87 to .95. The items of this scale can be measured on a 7-point likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). All items are positively scored. The possible total scores thus range from 25 to 175 with higher scores reflecting higher resilience. Wagnild (2009) has presented the following scoring for the total score: 25-100 = Very low, 101-115 = Low, 116-130 = On the low end, 131-145 = Moderate, 146-160 = Moderately high, and 161-175 = High.
- **Self-concept Inventory:** This scale was developed by Saraswat (1984), can be administered individually and also in groups, contains 48 items divided into six dimensions namely, physical self-concept i.e. individual's view of their body, health, physical appearance and strength, social self-concept i.e. individual's sense of worth in social interactions, temperamental self-concept i.e. individual's view of their prevailing emotional state or predominance of a particular kind of emotional reaction, educational self-concept i.e. individuals' view of themselves in relation to school, teachers and extracurricular activities, moral self-concept i.e. individuals' estimation of their moral worth and intellectual self-concept i.e. individual's awareness of their intelligence and capacity of problem solving and judgements. Its test-retest reliability is .91 and the reliability coefficient of dimensions varies from .67 to .88 whereas, its content and construct validity have been established through expert's opinion. The sum of scores for each dimension of the self-concept inventory can be obtained by adding the scores. The total self-concept scores are obtained by

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adding scores of all the six dimensions. The maximum obtained score is 240 and minimum is 48. High score on this inventory indicates high self-concept and low score means low self-concept.

Procedure

The objective of the present study was to explore the academic stress, resilience and self concept among school students (11th and 12th class only) and undergraduates. The present study was conducted using a mixed method approach. A non-probability sampling technique was used to collect a sample of 174 school students (11th and 12th class only) and undergraduates. Participants were informed about the nature and the purpose of the study and an informed consent was obtained from the participants stating that the questions answered by them would be kept anonymous and the identity of participants would be kept confidential. Participants were also told that their participation was completely voluntary and they were given the freedom to terminate from the study at any point of time. The Academic Stress Scale (Rajendran and Kaliappan, 1990), Resilience Scale (Wagnild and Young, 1993) and Self-concept Inventory (Saraswat ,1984) were administered through a google form and it took approximately 20 minutes for the respondents to complete these questionnaires. The data was analyzed both quantitatively (correlation method) and qualitatively (thematic analysis). Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to specify the relationship between the variables. A semi-structured interview method was also used to collect more in-depth data from 10 school students (11th and 12th class only) and 10 undergraduates. This data was then further thematically analyzed by transcribing, forming broad themes, sub themes and verbatims to identify significant features of the participant's academic stress, self-concept and resilience. Thematic analysis involves going back and forth among the data including the codes identified. The first step is to familiarize oneself with the data by understanding its general sense, generating codes, looking for themes for specific codes, reviewing them, defining and naming the themes and finally reporting the entire analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The aim of the present study was to explore the relationship of academic stress with resilience and self concept among school students (11th and 12th class only) and undergraduates.

Table 1: Showing mean and standard deviation of school students (11th and 12th class only) and undergraduates

	Education level	Mean	Standard deviation
Academic stress	Undergraduates	78.78	25.25
	School students (11th and 12th class only)	76.41	3.01
Resilience	Undergraduates	131.03	2.00
	School students (11th and 12th class only)	128.09	2.30
Self-concept	Undergraduates	166.51	1.71
	School students (11th and 12th class only)	164.74	1.78

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It can be seen from the above table that undergraduates have a slightly higher mean as compared to school students (11th and 12th class only) on all the three measures namely academic stress, resilience and self-concept.

Table 2: Showing t-value and p-value for the measured constructs (N=174)

Measures	t-value	p-value
Academic stress	.584	.560
Resilience	.964	.336
Self-concept	.717	.474

It can be seen from the above table that the t-value is not statistically significant for all the three dimensions namely academic stress, resilience and self-concept between school students and undergraduates.

Table 3: Showing the correlation coefficient of academic stress and resilience among school students (11th and 12th class only) and undergraduates

Sample	Academic stress and Resilience
Undergraduates	-.022
School students (11th and 12th class only)	-.096

It can be seen from the above table that non-significant low correlations were found between academic stress and resilience in school students (11th and 12th class only) and undergraduates.

Table 4: Showing the correlation coefficient between academic stress and self-concept among school students (11th and 12th class only) and undergraduates

Sample	Academic stress and Self-concept
Undergraduates	-.132
School students (11th and 12th class only)	-.097

It can be seen from the above table that non-significant low negative correlations were found between academic stress and self-concept among school students (11th and 12th class only) and undergraduates.

Table 5: Thematic analysis of school student's interview (N=10)

Themes	Codes	Verbatims
Lifestyle changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lack of sleep ● Hectic routine ● External distractions Limited recreational engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I began to give more time to my studies and compensate for my sleep, time used on phone and other leisure activities. ● I have to make sure that I am not watching any movie or any web series is also way too hectic because
Stressors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Wasting time ● Career uncertainty ● Personal problems ● Academic issues ● Interference Subject interest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Not being able to do what I planned for the day. ● toh jese career options hai toh esa hota hai ki jb hme inn subjects mai kuch krna hie nhi hai toh hum pdh kurhe hai ye ● Exams are giving me stress right now ● aage kya krungi aur career kya bnega

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Themes	Codes	Verbatims
		<p>aur future ki tension aur ghr mai bhi koi shannt nhi rhta kbhi bhi kisi ki bhi parents ki ldai hojati hai sb shorr machane lgte hai</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ki mai zda padh nhi pa rha hu time waste hora hai aur time kha kha use kr skta tha lekin nhi kia aur time waste hora hai toh usse zda stress hora hai
Pressure to study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Uncertainty about exams ● Higher studies Competition ● Parents/societal expectations ● Good grades ● Education system Self-esteem 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I think my self-esteem is very much related to the kind of marks I get in class ● in our society there is much much more emphasis on marks than it is on the knowledge ● sometimes I feel I don't want to study but you have no option because Indian education system is like that ● in exams your percentage matters to your parents and for yourself marks nhi aaye toh career nhi bnega
Impact on relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Peer relations ● Reduced interactions ● Conflicts Competition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I usually get into a fight with my mum at times because of this studying stuff because umm... ● lassmates aur friends ke beech marks ki wjh se competition aa jata hai ● peer relations mai jb koi group project hota hai toh unko bnane ke liai phir presentations krne ke liai umm...mummy ke sath didi ke sath bhi changes huai hai unse baat kam hogyi hai
Impact on self	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Financial expenses ● Low self-esteem ● Locus of control ● Self-confidence ● Self dissatisfaction Reinforcement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● a sort of or a source of getting your demands fulfilled ● I feel I will never be able to achieve anything in life and I won't get anywhere I want be a successful person I want to be a good psychologist either because for psychology you need to get good grades in your 12 so that you are able to get admission in a goodcollege so that won't happen so yeah this is all I feel ● jo bhi pore saal mai jo bhi pdhai pe expenses lge wo waste hogye ● It makes me feel disappointed in myself and question my worth
Skills and abilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Optimistic attitude ● Uncertainty aboutfuture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● if i keep working on them and putting more effort on them then of course i will but if i don't then that's my loss of course ● attentiveness towards work that I have been given and also my optimistic

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Themes	Codes	Verbatims
		mindset.
Coping abilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Low confidence ● Emotional well-being ● Pre planning External factors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● there are a lot of external factors that might influence about which you are completely unaware ● I try to you know I try to plan ahead of time so that I don't get stuck during my exams ● My stress has led me to be impatient and short-tempered
Dealing with burnout	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Distraction ● Escape and avoidance ● Relaxing ● Problem solving attitude ● Parental and social support/guidance ● Emotion focused coping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I feel that at that point of time my body needed rest so I give rest to my body and then when my classes started again I took time to adjust to that because I got used to being in bed all the time but I got comfortable with that the winter season went and summers kind of began to come ● I read memes, I sleep, go for a walk ● I prefer listening to music and try to talk to someone i really trust ● i thought maybe it was my mistake which i can't change now ● Kch nhi mene bs kch din pdhai nhi kri mai bs time waste krta rha games khelta rha i feel ki ya i can do this why am i worrying about it so it influences so study and work more rather than sitting in corner and crying
Recreational facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Enhanced mood ● Reduced stress ● Better concentration ● body fitness ● Self-awareness Confidence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● it also makes me feel close to myself enhances my concentration and it helps me get back on track easily and I don't feel very very bored and and what else and it also gives me a sense of confidence ● hmara jo mind hota h wo light ho jata h, stress kam hojata h mood bhi shi hojata hai, friend se baat krne mai bhi kafi relief milta hai helps me get rid of my stress and engage my body as well as my mind in the game, it helps my mind and body to exercise and focus on my studies
Impact on health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Interdependent ● Impact on physical health ● Psychological impact ● Enhanced speed ● Cognitive abilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● when I am having a lot of stress I feel very and healthy I feel sick I experience a lot of headache my eyes began to pain then if I am not feeling physically healthy like it's my body is paining or if I haven't had enough sleep so that makes me feel mentally sick my motivation gets dropped the lot and I feel

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Themes	Codes	Verbatims
		<p>disinterested in activities or anyone in my studies so that has a lot of interest earned on my academic performance because my motivation decreases and it's my motivation decreases that and not in a mood to study in if I am not in a mood to study of asli it will affect my grades and it will also affect my self-esteem and the confidence that I have in myself</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● mann nhi krta pdhne ka concentrate nhi ho pata aur physical health khrab hogi toih bhi yhi hoga ki aram krle pdhai nhi ho paegi ● a good an optimistic mindset makes my physical health to be good as too much negative overthinking can divert focus from my academics and make me even in the fields i'm good at so a good mental health lets me think positive
Driving forces of academic stress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Academics ● Distractions ● Ill health ● Socialization ● Moral character ● Achieving dreams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● teachers also create a lot of pressure on you because they also tend to have a lot of Expectations ● marks also tends to give a lot of benefits like people are more likely to talk to you and be friends with you ● theoretical things that i have to learn in my academics as there are some theories which are boring but still important to learn who peer pressure and all, good grades aur parents ki expectations aur ye darr dala jata hai dimag mai ki agr marks nhi aaenge toh kch nhi hoga toh wo cheez bhi hai ● Online mode ki wjh se hmare upr koi nazar nhi rkh rha hai jiski wjh se concentration bilkul khrab ho chuka hai aur poore time phone pe rhne ki wjh se headache hone lga hai cervical ki problem hogyi hai aur neck mai pain bhi toh physical health bhi khrab hogyi hai aur ye bhi smgh nhi ata ki 12th mai kya hoga kuki 11th ka sara base khrba hogya hai keeping up with the society, social media, and many more

Table 6: Thematic analysis of undergraduate's interview (N=10)

Themes	Codes	Verbatims
Lifestyle/routine changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sleep compromising ● Procrastination ● Frequent changes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I have to compromise my sleep time and sometimes ● shuru mai kaafi hectic lgta tha jese

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Personal Responsibility Organized 	<p>school se toh 3 bje ghr aate the hum lekin phir kafi mushkil hui 1st yr mai ki bs ghr bhaag jao</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● i set goals in my mind and i get stressed by that and before it actually gets into action
Stressors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Academics ● Ill health ● Family issues ● Societal pressure ● Vulnerability ● Cognitive tasks ● Lack of socialization ● External interference 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Currently it's just my academic and my body functions assignments, deadlines ● all of it is very standardized there is no flexibility ● log Itna pressurize karte hain ● i know i have to prepare for masters but mai nhi kr rhi hu bca im you know just tell myself i'm not sure ki mujhe kya karna hai aage ● mai classes nhi attend kr rhi hu toh uska stress hota hai ki khi mai kch left out na krdu ● to still fit in and to have that conformity with class that i'm contributing ● decisions making capability
Pressure to study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Academic issues ● Uncertainty ● Unlearning ● Productivity ● Education system ● Society's stereotypes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● a all the time, even though this is something of my interest i still feel like i am pressuring myself to study or concentrate because i lose my concentration very easily these days because of stress that is coming from not performing well in my higher studies ● toh jaise exams ke time pe toh i have to study there's no other option wrna i feel i have wasted something pora semester mai kuki jo sheet mai marks aaye hai whi decide krenge how you are studying ● i put a lot of pressure on myself to be productive and mere dimag mai productivity tb hoti hai when i'm doing academics
Impact on relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Friends ● Family ● Knowledge influences communication ● Validation by others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Peer relation is good, all my classmates they cooperate and my friends have a positive attitude towards whatever i am doing in my academics but family interactions initially it was difficult to gather some support from them because of the field that i am trying to make a career in ● I don't have time to meet friends meri

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		<p>family complaint Karti Hai I don't have some me time in fact it's</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● i had a subject feminism so all those things created a major impact on how i interacted with my parents so ya lot has changed ● i think in sense of peer relation wo cheez rehti hai ki people scoring more than you you feel like what did this person do that i did not do sometimes dekha jae toh college dosto se hie milne jate the
Impact on self	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Dissociating frommarks ● Locus of control ● Self concept ● Self-criticism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● i have stopped bothering about my grades ● i feel terrible i feel like my sense of self is so much linked to my grades bcz like bachpan se whenever i score less it shatters my own perception ki like you don't work hard you're so lazy you don't do anything toh like tujhe toh kuch karna hie nahi hai but even though very possible ki mene jee jaan laga kar padha ho and there wasn't much more i could have done but whenever i score less it shatters my self esteem
Skills and abilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Belief in one's ability ● Confidence ● Curiosity ● Personality ● Skills ● Lack of clarity ● Practical knowledge ● Working on self 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I think ok Jo Mujhe skills and abilities college Ne di hai they are very very limited in the sense that they will only help me in my Masters ya fir when I do doctorate ● confidence hmsha help krta hai a lot of comes from my own personality my skills and how i actually am so that is what will make me succeed
Coping abilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Time management ● Short-term goals ● Emotion focused coping ● Appreciating ● Accepting negative feelings ● Escaping Isolating ● self-criticism ● Perfectionism ● Pre-planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I suck at time management ● bcz of my family support and brother it helped me a lot look forward to my session but wo bhi mai krti hu isolate and then kuch cheez mujhe affect kar raha hai na toh i won't touch it only i would isolate ● i guess i'm a little low at starting but when later i become resilient and looking for solutions ● i go for a cup of noodles because that's my escape so wherever i'm able to complete even a short term goal or even one day goal then at the end of the day ekdum se i feel very inflated ki okay im able to do it and everything will be fine
Dealing with	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Difficulty resting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● with friends ka support

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burnout	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Friend's support ● Acceptance ● Communication ● Therapy ● Broad outlook ● Collective motivation ● Alternative thinking ● Family time <p>Problem focused</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mere father supportive hai to like I spend a lot time almost every evening ● if i don't communicate my feelings to other person i don't feel good and problem wasn't i can't manage time ● i was able to go with it was because of the motivation given by my seniors and society captain
Recreational facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Enhanced self-concept/mood ● Productive feeling ● Gain experience ● Enhances creativity ● Assertiveness ● Boosts confidence ● Appreciation from others ● Recreational ● Create balance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● It gave me some kind of relief and I'm able to create something. It gives me peace and ya it makes me feel like okay i have some kind of talent or value. It helps me increase my self-esteem. ● i find a balance i also get exposure they have done good to me also in terms of my learning and opening up and become aware of things and assertiveness bdha dia h ● wo creativity ko abilities ko enhance krta hai jeet jao toh abilities ko enhance krta hai aur na jeeto toh experience milta hai
Impact on health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Positive relationship ● Lack of interest ● Lack of balance ● Overwhelming ● Low confidence ● Difficulty inconcentration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I'm not able to study at all and i'm just able to do stuff of deadlines wala kaam but not something voluntarily ● i tend to overwork and tend to forget to eat and get up from where i am and do basic things and my sleep schedule is also messed up ● it changed my view about myself ● if i'm not mentally and physically healthy then i really can't study and mtlb abhi jise periods mai bhi if i'm having 1st day toh i can't study
Driving forces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Academics ● Family issues ● Lack of support ● Mental health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yes family factors and ek wo hota hai ki if someone from my field or class knows something about syllabus but if i don't know that i feel so inferior ya ashamed ki why did i not study or focus on this topic toh i feel ki i need to do it ● mental health ka to bahut hi jyada major influence Hi I cannot study Agar Jaisa karo Jise Kehte Meri padhaai mood pe depend karti hai ● my motivation is very low and causes stress in that sense cuz its all like ki kab hoga kaam and parental influence ● i believe that if my teachers would

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		<p>have been more empathetic and structured in their teaching and like a little less aggressive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● khi na khi hota hai ki parents ko proud feel krwana hai aur teachers darati hai ki college nhi milega ye nhi hoga
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DISCUSSION

The aim of the present study is to explore the relationship of academic stress with resilience and self concept among school students (11th and 12th class only) and undergraduates. Academic stress can be defined as the body's response to academic-related demands which exceed students' adaptive capabilities. Self-concept refers to an individual's perception of it's behavior, abilities, and unique characteristics or simply, "a mental picture of who you are as a person". Resilience refers to the psychological quality that allows people to be knocked down by the adversities of life and come back as strong as before.

A non-probability sampling technique was used to collect a sample of 174 school students (11th and 12th class only) and undergraduates on the Academic Stress Scale (Rajendran and Kaliappan, 1990), Resilience Scale (Wagnild and Young, 1993) and Self-concept Inventory (Saraswat ,1984). The data was analyzed both quantitatively through the use of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and qualitatively through semi-structured interview method.

The explanation and interpretation of the results in the light of the various hypotheses that were formulated for the present study have been discussed below:

Hypothesis 1 states that there will be a significant relationship between academic stress and self-concept of school students. The correlation computed between academic stress and self-concept of school students has been found to be negatively low and non-significant (-.097) and hence hypothesis 1 has been rejected. One reason for such a result could be the existence of various other factors apart from academic stress that determine the self-concept of school students, the support received by them from parents and interests in various other activities apart from academic engagement that helps define themselves. Study by Khan and Alam (2015) found statistically significant low correlation between academic stress and self-concept of high school students.

Hypothesis 2 states that there will be a significant relationship between academic stress and self-concept of undergraduates. The correlation computed between academic stress and self-concept of school students has been found to be negatively low and non-significant (-.132). And therefore hypothesis 2 has been rejected. One reason for such a result could be the existence of various other factors apart from academic stress that determine the self-concept of undergraduates, the support received by them from parents and interests in various other activities apart from academic engagement that helps define themselves.

Hypothesis 3 indicates that there will be a significant relationship between academic stress and resilience of school students. The correlation between academic stress and resilience of school students has been found to be negatively low and non-significant (-.096) and hence hypothesis 3 has been rejected. One reason for such a result could be the ability of school students not to have to experience situations that demands them to cope/deal with the stress

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related to their academics. Study by Sharma (2015) found a negative correlation of academic stress with resilience and optimism among adolescents however, these variables were found to significantly predict academic stress. Another study by Hussain and Thakur (2019) found that resilience and academic stress are negatively correlated among male and female students.

Hypothesis 4 indicates that there will be a significant relationship between academic stress and resilience of undergraduates. The correlation between academic stress and resilience of undergraduates has been found to be negatively low and non-significant (-.022). This implies that hypothesis 4 has been rejected. One reason for such a result could be the ability of undergraduates to not have to experience situations that demands them to cope/deal with the stress related to their academics along with the availability of resources that help them deal with the stressful situations such as support from friends and family, engagement in recreational activities, high levels of motivation and self-esteem. Acosta-Gómez, Roca-Chiapas, Zavala-Bervena, Cisneros, Pérez, Rodrigues & Novack (2018) found that students' main responses to stress were listening to music, talking with someone about the problem, and exercise. Jane Roli (2018) found that academic stress, resilience, peer relation and teacher support are significant predictors of undergraduate's academic confidence. However, there has been no study found which indicates a non-significant negative low correlation between academic stress and resilience of undergraduates specifically.

Hypothesis 5 indicates that there will be a significant difference between school and undergraduate students on academic stress, self concept and resilience. However, t-test revealed no significant difference between school and undergraduate students on academic stress, self concept and resilience further indicating that the mean of undergraduates on all the three measures namely academic stress, resilience and self-concept is higher as compared to the mean of school students (11th and 12th class only) on all the three measures namely academic stress, resilience and self-concept. Higher academic stress among undergraduates might be because of greater autonomy, fear of failure, independence and responsibility on them for their career and what they make out of their opportunities which may further contribute to their adjustment stress, self-concept and resilience negatively and positively as well in comparison to that of school students (11th and 12th class only). Snehaja and Mani (2016) found that fear of failure was a major contributor to stress along with limited time for recreation and home-sickness to be major non-academic sources of stress. Bataineh (2013) found that high family expectations is one of the reasons for undergraduate's high stress levels.

In thematic analysis, the first broad theme is lifestyle/routine changes which indicates that both school students and undergraduates compensate on their sleep and other basic needs (eating and bathing) for their academic related responsibilities as they have to follow an hectic routine and are also likely to have limited engagement in other activities. Also, school students experience various other distractions as a part of their academics whereas on the other hand undergraduates are likely to experience various frequent changes in their lifestyle, procrastinate and also get a feeling of being organized as a result of their academics.

The second broad theme is stressors. Some common stressors were found between school students and undergraduates such as academic related issues (submissions, online classes, examinations, low grades), family/relationship issues and societal pressure, getting out of

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comfort zone, worry of available career options and interference of external factors in planned routine. School students also get stressed by the guilt of wasting time and also because of lack of interest in some subjects which further automatically reduces their motivation to study. Whereas, undergraduates experience stress as a result of health issues such as lack of enough sleep and covid-19 precautions, not able to appropriately carry out cognitive tasks such as decision making, decreased concentration and exhaustion from mentally planning tasks, a constant desire to be perfect and not being able to socialize.

The third broad theme is pressure to study. It was found that school students and undergraduates experience some common forces which lead them to experience a pleasure to study which include thinking of the consequences of not performing well, stress about higher studies and career, pressure from society and parents to score good, uncertainty about future due to covid, measuring their self-esteem through good grades and through increased productivity and unsatisfying education system. School students also experience a pressure to study because of the fear of being left behind whereas undergraduates also think about the finances spent on their studies.

The fourth broad theme is the influence of academics on relationships which indicated almost similar impact as both school students and undergraduates have experienced better relationships and interactions with classmates and friends as a result of team projects and submissions as academic becomes a source of common interactions, however because of increased engagement in academic related tasks there has been a decrease in amount of time spent with family and increased family conflicts due to gaps in thinking patterns, peer pressure and more competition amongst each other and undergraduates also experience difference in opinion with their parents because of the kind of subject they are studying.

The fifth broad theme is the impact of low grades on self. It was seen that when students believe to have studied well for exams and expect to get good grades but end up getting low grades then they are more likely to blame themselves for less marks whereas if they are aware that they did not prepare well and won't be getting good grades and end up getting good grades then they are not much affected because they did not expect good grades. Hence, locus of control plays an important role. Some participants (both school students and undergraduates) were also found to attach their self-esteem to their grades. However, some undergraduate participants claimed to give less importance to marks as knowledge matters more for them than grades, are optimistic about their future, know their potential to work harder whereas, others engage in negative self-talk and self-criticism if they end up getting low grades. On the other hand, school students are likely to get dissatisfied with oneself as a result of low grades because for some of them good grades is a source of reinforcement and helps them believe in their abilities.

The sixth broad theme is good skills and abilities which identifies the extent to which they believe they are capable of future responsibilities. It was seen that school students have an optimistic attitude towards their belief in themselves although they are not clear about their future career roles. Undergraduate participants also reported belief in their abilities and skills, confidence being an important aspect, having curiosity to learn and explore although they experience similar confusion with respect to future shortcoming as they are working on themselves.

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The seventh broad theme is coping abilities. It was seen that undergraduate participants reported a wide spectrum of abilities and skills they use to cope with difficult situations as most of them were aware of their coping mechanisms such as meeting short term goals acts as a source of reinforcement, appreciating and accepting negative feelings, giving importance to one's emotions by isolating oneself, escaping from the situation and even planning ahead of time so that difficulties do not arise later whereas some of them reported to engage in self-criticism, have concentration issues, desires to seek perfectionism and lack of time management ability due to which difficulties arise from which they are not able to cope. However on the other hand, school students experience low confidence and are easily influenced by external factors which influences their ability to cope and consider pre-planning and emotional well-being as important to help cope with distress.

The eighth broad theme is dealing with burnout. It was seen that there are some common ways which help both school students and undergraduates to deal with burnout such as focusing on the problem and thinking of various other alternatives to deal with the situation, support from friends/family/parents, accepting the situation and dealing with the emotions. However, undergraduates also believe to get help from therapy, having a broad perspective and collective motivation in case of team work whereas a participant also reported having difficulty in accepting the need to take a break.

The ninth broad theme is the impact of engagement in extracurricular activities. It was found that there are some common impacts of engaging in extracurricular activities for school students and undergraduates such as it enhances mood, reduces stress as it serves as a source of recreation and acts as a source of confidence. School students also reported to achieve a sense of increased self-awareness as a result of engaging in other activities along with better concentration and body fitness. On the other hand, undergraduates feel a sense of enhanced self-concept, feel productive, see it as a source of break from academic routine as it enhances their creativity and makes them assertive, creates a balance and is a source of appreciation from other people.

The tenth broad theme is the role of mental and physical health. It was seen that majority of participants found mental and physical health to be positively related to each other as both of them are complementary and dependent on each other since if they do not feel physically healthy then it also impacts their mental health by reducing concentration/ interest/ confidence/ motivation/ self-esteem and if they do not feel mentally healthy then they experience fatigue, body pain and deteriorated cognitive abilities.

The last i.e., the eleventh broad theme is sources of academic stress. It indicated that both school students and undergraduates experience academic stress due to academic responsibilities such as online classes, pressure from parents/society/peers/classmates, competition, teachers approach, fear of less marks and expectations from oneself along with mental health issues such as emotional well-being and low motivation. Undergraduates also experience academic stress due to family issues and lack of support from significant others whereas, school students experience academic stress due to external distractions, need to socialize, health related issues, pressure to maintain a good moral character and desires to achieve and fulfil one's dreams.

The data for the present study has been collected both through quantitative and qualitative methods and the comparative analysis of the data has been discussed below.

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The first objective was to determine the relationship between academic stress and self-concept of school students. It can be seen from the thematic analysis that as a result of less marks in school, students experience a low self-esteem and doubt their ability to perform good in future (I feel I will never be able to achieve anything in life) with less belief in their capabilities, become dissatisfied with themselves (It makes me feel disappointed in myself and question my worth) and their academic performance. School students view good academic performance/good grades as a source of reinforcement for them as it helps in getting their demands fulfilled. Moreover, there is great importance of the responsibility they take for their scores. If students feel that they prepared enough to get good grades and still end up getting less then they are more likely to blame the external factors whereas on the other hand if they fail to prepare and perform good and eventually get less marks then they are more likely to blame themselves for the failure. Hence, self-concept of school students is determined by their academic stress to some extent. School students also have a positive outlook to developing good skills in future if they continue working on themselves despite uncertainties (if i keep working on them and putting more effort on them then of course i will but if i don't then that's my loss of course, attentiveness towards work that I have been given and also my optimistic mindset). Similar results were reported by Ayesha Khan and Shah Alam (2015) as they found statistically significant negative correlation between academic stress and self-concept. However, statistical analysis conducted to test hypothesis 1 did not suggest congruent results as the correlation computed between academic stress and self-concept of school students has been found to be negatively low and non-significant (-.097)

The second objective was stated as to determine the relationship between academic stress and self-concept of undergraduates. Some undergraduates reported giving less importance to their marks (i have stopped bothering about my grades) and focusing more on building up a good mature personality with focus on practical skills and vocational activities. Whereas, most of the participants reported to measure their self-worth and productivity through the amount of time they engage in academics related tasks and the kind of marks they get and if they are not able to get good grades then they are also likely to engage in self-defeating behaviors such as criticising/blaming oneself and engaging in negative self-talk (i feel terrible i feel like my sense of self is so much linked to my grades bcz like bachpan se whenever i score less it shatters my own perception ki like you don't work hard you're so lazy you don't do anything toh like tujhe toh kuch karna hie nahi hai) which further increases the chances of making their self-concept to turn negative. Moreover, there is great importance of the responsibility they take for their scores. If undergraduates feel that they prepared enough to get good grades and still end up getting less then they are more likely to blame the external factors whereas on the other hand if they fail to prepare and perform good and eventually get less marks then they are more likely to blame themselves for the failure (Ha toh jese mai expect apne aap se kuch aur kr rhi hu aur marks aate kuch aur hai toh khi na khi bhot ganda lgta hsi ki mene shyd try nhi kra zda aur jb pta chlta hai ki sbke hie kam aaye toh ek sense of relief milta hai ki khi na khi checking mai hie problem hui hogi bt kjbhi kbhi ye bhi hota hai ki mene shyd zda pdha hota toh mai ache marks le aati). Some of them also believe that their academic engagement does not provide them with enough practical knowledge whereas others believe that a curious personality, required skills and confidence (being successful as a lot of comes from my own personality my skills and how i actually am so that is what will make me succeed) will definitely help them achieve success in their desired fields despite the lack of clarity that persists (i believe in myself i feel kuch acha ho hie jayega i'm optimistic). Thus, the academic stress of undergraduates is to some extent

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determines their self-concept and their belief in the ability to succeed. However, statistical analysis conducted to test hypothesis 2 did not suggest congruent results as the correlation computed between academic stress and self-concept of school students has been found to be negatively low and non-significant (-.132).

The third objective was stated as to determine the relationship between academic stress and resilience of school students. It was seen that school students are not confident enough in their ability to deal with their academic stress. However, some of them reported that a good emotional well-being and planning in advance to avoid last minute tensions (I try to you know I try to plan ahead of time so that I don't get stuck during my exams) are likely to help in dealing with issues however, the unexpected and sudden interference of external factors (entire life is not in your control there are a lot of external factors that might influence about which you are completely of the might be completely aware of so I also keep that in my mind) might make it challenging for them to deal with the academic related tasks. Also, distraction, escape and avoidance, relaxing, problem solving/focusing on emotions and parental and social support/guidance are some ways in which students reported to be able to deal with stress and burnout which further helps them become more resilient. However, statistical analysis of the quantitative data indicates that the relationship between the academic stress and resilience among school students was found to be negatively low non-significant (-.096) which is an incongruent result as compared to the qualitative data.

The fourth objective was stated as to determine the relationship between academic stress and resilience of undergraduates. Undergraduates reported that they are not able to deal with academic stress due to difficulty in time management, concentration issues, desire to seek perfectionism (stresses me out ki i won't be able to do it perfectly so i just wont start and this affects me and i can't do things till last moment but i really don't know how to cope with it) and self-criticism however, planning in advance, meeting short-term goals (wherever i'm able to complete even a short term goal or even one day goal then at the end of the day ekdum se i feel very inflated ki okay im able to do it and everything will be fine) and validating one's emotions (i have experienced those negative emotions and processed them and i feel they are also important toh mujhe lagta hai ki ab agr aae bhi toh i appreciate them ki inka ana bhi natural hai) are some ways that help undergraduates to cope with their academic stress. Also, therapy, communication, spending time with family/friends, collective motivation, broad outlook, alternative thinking are some ways in which undergraduates are able to deal with stress and burnout which further helps them become more resilient. Similar results were reported by Mathur and Sharma (2015) as they found that academic stress correlated negatively with optimism and resilience and both the variables significantly predicted academic stress. However, statistical analysis of the quantitative data suggest incongruent results as the correlation between academic stress and resilience of undergraduates has been found to be negatively low and non-significant (-.022).

The fifth objective was stated as to identify the difference between school and undergraduate students on academic stress, self-concept and resilience. It has been seen from the thematic analysis that with respect to routine changes, undergraduates are more likely to procrastinate but also feel a sense of organization due to their academic engagement such as attending classes, submitting assignments, preparing for exams, etc.,. School students are more likely to experience stress as a result of lack of interest in some subjects and also by the thought of wasting time whereas, undergraduates are more likely to experience stress due to their health issues which further reduces their cognitive fluency, lack of socialization and desires of

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perfectionism. For school students, fear of being left behind acts as a major source of pressure to study whereas for undergraduates it is their academic expenses spent. Academics has increased school students' competition with peers/classmates and reduced their interactions with family and friends; however undergraduate's academic engagement has increased their interaction with friends but decreased with family. Less marks make school students feel dissatisfied with themselves, reducing their self-esteem. However, most of the undergraduates give less importance to marks and more importance to their skills and practical knowledge. For school students, distraction, escape and avoidance, relaxing, problem solving/focusing on emotions and parental and social support/guidance are some ways in which deal with stress and burnout whereas, for undergraduates therapy, communication, spending time with family/friends, collective motivation, broad outlook, alternative thinking are more helpful. Although there are differences between undergraduates and school students on the construct of academic stress, self-concept and resilience, despite these differences there are various similarities in terms of their mental/physical health and engagement in other activities impacting their academic stress. However, statistical analysis did not suggest congruent results as t-test revealed that there was no significant difference between school and undergraduate students on the dimension of academic stress, self concept and resilience.

The sixth objective was to identify the factors influencing academic stress of school and undergraduate students. For school students online classes, fear of low grades, desire to make parents proud, meeting societal expectations, teacher's expectations, competition with classmates, pressure by parents and worry about future, distractions, ill health, socialization, need to maintain a good moral character and desires to achieve dreams are factors that affect their academic stress whereas for undergraduates, lack of being consistent, perfectionism , comparing one's knowledge to that of classmate's, pressure from teachers, wanting to make parents feel proud, teacher's approach, faulty education system, inability to maintain a balance and unorganized syllabus/study material are major sources of academic stress. Similar results have been reported by Deb and colleagues (2015) as they found academic stress to be positively correlated with parental pressure and psychiatric problems while examination-related anxiety also was positively related to psychiatric problems and Snehaja and Mani (2016) found that fear of failure was a major contributor to stress.

Moreover, it was also seen from the semi-structured interview participant's responses that online classes have played a major role in influencing their academic stress. School students reported difficulty in understanding some concepts due to online mode which further acts as a stressor for them further influencing their engagement in academic tasks and influencing their academic self-concept (because you don't get to understand concepts easily when you attend online classes moreover you don't have the right focus online like phone rings and there are notifications, we don't complete our assignments too and we copy waste and we can you know find answers from google). Also, the entire pandemic situation has increased student's uncertainty about their classes, exams and future career options (kuki ho skta hai ki paer ho ya kch bhi ho ya phir time kam ho yaad krna ho aur mann nhi ho lekin zarori h yaad krna aur pdhna). Students have also been experiencing conflicts with their parents due to increased time spent on phone as a result of online classes, assignment and submissions (you know you have your work a phone but your parents think you are busy on your phone chatting and stuff so ya diverting their minds ki no we are actually doing some school stuff). Online classes has also been exposing students to various other stressful factors such as physical and mental health issues as a result of increased use of mobile phones (Online

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mode ki wjh se hmare upr koi nazar nhi rkh rha hai jiski wjh se concentration bilkul khrab ho chuka hai aur poore time phone pe rhne ki wjh se headache hone lga hai cervical ki problem hogyi hai aur neck mai pain bhi toh physical health bhi khrab hogyi hai aur ye bhi smgh nhi ata ki 12th mai kya hoga kuki 11th ka sara base khrba hogya hai). School students are also not able to take their education serious because of the online mode since they reported not having to learn and be mentally present during classes which has further affected their concentration levels and motivation to study (classes online start hui toh phone pe toh classes lene ka koi faeda hie nhi hota kuki wese hie itni zda disturbance hoti hai aur phone bhi saath mai hie hai toh phir kya hie pdhai hogi aur mai mentally bhi khudko prepare nhi kr pai pdhne ke liai ya exam dene ke liai bina apne notes mai se dekhe). Whereas, undergraduates reported that online classes has reduced their chances of interaction with friends since college served as a medium to meet and interact with friends and form close bonds and also as a way to get some time apart from family members (dekha jae toh college dosto se hie milne jate the pdhai toh secondary hota tha toh isliye better tha bhot baar esa hota hai ki break chiye hoti hai family se poora time apni family ke sath nhi rhe skte ho toh khi na khi usse bhi kafi acha tareka tha ki bahar jakr tu ek doisre se mil skte ho chahe coillege ka bahana h lekin ab esa kch nhi h family ghr pe hie hai dosto se mil nhi skte). Similar results have been reported by Raj and Fatima (2020) as they found that most of the students are worried about their study and are not satisfied with the classes conducted online and similarly, Moawad (2020) found that the issue with the highest percentage of stress among students is their uncertainty over the end of semester exams and assessments.

On the basis of these results, some suggestions can be given to enhance the overall well-being of school students and undergraduates on the individual and community level.

1. The results of this study can be referred to by educational psychologists to enhance a positive learning environment in the classroom which will further lead to better education and reduced academic stress experienced by students.
2. Interventions can be planned for students at college level to enhance their abilities to use protective factors such as social support systems, personal well-being and strong resilience to deal with stressful situations.
3. Non-classroom programs can be encouraged to help students develop positive personal characteristics such as high self-esteem, high-self-concept, self-confidence, hope, optimism, resilience and an ability to be humorous during tough times which will help them get distracted from distress.
4. Using this study as a base schools, colleges, universities and other educational institutions can be encouraged to have adequate availability of resources that students can use to meet their emotional needs such as safe spaces to come together and share feelings and availability of a qualified counselor/clinical psychologist along with spaces where students can engage in activities other than academics such as art, games, music, book clubs, movie clubs as this will also encourage students to find other areas of interest which will also serve as a way for students to relax.
5. Findings of this research can also be used as a base to encourage educational institute to hold frequent sessions with parents of students which will serve the purpose of making parents aware of the students progress not only academically but also in terms of their engagement in other activities so that parents can get an opportunity to become more aware of their child's capabilities and know what areas require to be worked upon and if the child is having any issues/challenges emotionally/physically/academically.

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6. Government should be encouraged to create innovative policies in terms of education that not only includes providing students with knowledge of their history, literature, geography or mathematics but also including classes in emotional intelligence skills to be made compulsory which will prepare students to deal with the academic stress and other challenges outside classrooms, reduce excessive emphasis on grades, shift focus on enhancing students understanding of the subjects, incorporating stress education in curriculum, revise examination and evaluation policies, ensuring that students receive adequate support from their parents, teachers and school as a whole to deal with academic stress and other challenges, educating students about positive health promoting behaviors and their importance so that students are mentally and physically prepared to face the challenges of the world help students develop effective coping strategies.
7. Interventions for parent population should also be formulated and implemented which will help them develop their skills to; pay attention to the needs of their children who are still studying, identify signs of stress, low self-concept and self-esteem, fatigue, burnout and academic stress in them, learn how to respond to these needs in a more empathetic and supportive way by emphasizing their learning over importance to grades, increasing and enhancing the quality of family time, encourage healthy habits, increasing affective communications, helping them build feelings of self-worth and help them cope with challenges during difficult times.
8. It is also important that students engage in healthy behaviors such as; having a nutritious diet which helps keep the body fit and mind active, sleeping on time which enhances concentration for studies and increases student's ability to function effectively during the day, exercising which helps students develop positive views about oneself, a healthy mind and body and relieve from stress, not engaging in substance use behaviors as they have harmful effects on cognitive abilities, set realistic goals for oneself which help in being productive and realizing one's potential as too much of engagement during the day can be hectic and tiring for mind and body leading to burnout, learning stress-management skills as they help enhance abilities of problem solving, decision making and help relax one's mind and body, finding time to relax as short breaks in between help body to calm and mind to get fresh further promoting effectiveness and enhanced motivation, being optimistic as it helps prevent distress and work hard by believing in oneself and one's capabilities to succeed, building resilience which helps being hopeful and optimistic and promotes ability to successfully deal with challenging not viewing them as obstacles rather as opportunities to learn and grow, students should also reach out to elders/parents/counselors/teachers in times of need, take life challenges as a part of growth and view problems and setbacks simply as temporary and not permanent and build positive interpersonal relationships which may serve as a way to de-stress, gain support and persistence.

CONCLUSION

The aim of the present study was to explore academic stress, resilience and self concept among school students and undergraduates. Statistical analysis indicates that undergraduates are high on constructs of academic stress, self-concept and resilience although the relationship of academic stress with the self-concept and resilience of school students and undergraduates has been found to be non significant and negatively low. It was also found that there was no significant difference between undergraduates and school students on the dimension of academic stress, resilience and self concept. However, according to thematic

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analysis it was found that participants' academic stress is a significant predictor of school students and undergraduates self-concept and resilience. Also, there were various common factors found common between school students and undergraduates responses with respect to academic stress, self-concept and resilience. This discrepancy in the results of thematic and statistical analysis can be because of the presence of extreme values on scales used since the scores obtained cannot be represented on a normal probability curve, also there might not be much difference in the age gap of school students and undergraduates. It is also possible that thematic analysis measured various different factors associated with academic stress, self-concept and resilience such as pressure to study, role of mental and physical health, sources of academic stress, daily life stressors, dealing with burnout, impact of less marks on self, lifestyle/routine changes, influence of academics on relationships, good skills and abilities and impact of engaging in extracurricular activities on self whereas, statistical tools measured only the required constructs hence leading the results to be different. However, a negative relationship of academic stress with self-concept and resilience of school students and undergraduates indicates that an increase/decrease in academic stress further decreases/increases their self-concept and resilience simultaneously.

Limitations

This study did not use a cross-sectional approach, variables other than education level were not taken into consideration. The results of this study cannot be accurately generalized because the samples were approached over the internet using non-probability sampling, were majorly from Delhi-NCR and the triangulation method was also not used.

Future implications

Future research should be accommodative of people from LGBTQIA+ community and high risk spaces (sex workers, juvenile kids, low socioeconomic backgrounds). The relationship of academic stress with self-concept and resilience of students with mental disorders and physical disabilities should be studied with focus on how the type of family, family's employment status, student's birth order, sibling relationship, parent's marital status, student's peer groups and developmental challenges impacts their academic stress and its relationship with their self-concept and resilience. The impact of academic stress can also be studied on other variables such as an individual's meaning in life, optimism, hope, resilience, life satisfaction, happiness, self-esteem, mental health, locus of control and motivation.

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Acknowledgement

The author(s) appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Goyal A. (2021). Exploring the Relationship of Academic Stress with Resilience and Self-concept of School Students and Undergraduates. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 9(4), 2065-2095. DIP:18.01.197.20210904, DOI:10.25215/0904.197