

Research Paper

Psychological Stressors and Academic Performance: Investigating Frustration among Higher Secondary Students in Jammu

Saleeta Azhar Masoodi^{1*}, Dr. Mohammad Zubair Kales²

ABSTRACT

This study examines the impact of psychological stressors—particularly frustration—on the academic performance of higher secondary students in Jammu, India. Adolescence represents a critical developmental stage during which students face heightened stress due to academic demands, socio-economic challenges, and expectations for academic achievement. This research investigates frustration as a psychological response to obstacles or inadequacies and explores its influence on students' academic outcomes. The study further examines how socio-demographic factors, including gender, locality, and caste, interact with psychological factors like frustration, anxiety, and aggression. Using a normative survey methodology, data were collected from a randomized sample of 300 students attending government higher secondary schools across Jammu. Standardized instruments measured levels of anxiety, frustration, and aggression, providing a comprehensive view of these psychological stressors. Findings revealed notably higher frustration levels among rural and female students, suggesting that limited resources and societal expectations exacerbate academic pressures in these groups. Rural students, in particular, face barriers due to inadequate educational resources and support, which contributes to elevated frustration. Female students frequently contend with societal pressures to perform well academically, which intensifies both frustration and anxiety. The study highlights a significant correlation between frustration and reduced academic performance, with higher frustration levels associated with lower grades and diminished school engagement. Additionally, a positive relationship between frustration and aggression indicates that students experiencing frustration may exhibit aggressive behaviors that impact their academic and social functioning. These findings emphasize the importance of addressing frustration holistically, as it has compounding effects on students' well-being and academic success. This research provides insights into mental health challenges among adolescents in Jammu, advocating for targeted interventions to alleviate academic stress. Recommended interventions include stress management programs tailored to students' socio-demographic backgrounds and incorporating socio-emotional learning in curricula to foster effective coping strategies. The study calls for collaboration among educators, parents, and policymakers to create supportive educational environments, particularly for underserved communities. By addressing these psychological stressors proactively, educational institutions in Jammu and similar regions can enhance both academic

¹Mewar University, Chittorgarh, Rajasthan, India

²Dean, Faculty of Education Cluster University of Jammu

*Corresponding Author

Received: January 07, 2025; Revision Received: January 10, 2025; Accepted: January 12, 2025

Psychological Stressors and Academic Performance: Investigating Frustration among Higher Secondary Students in Jammu

success and mental well-being among adolescents facing complex socio-economic challenges.

Keywords: *Frustration, Academic Performance, Psychological Stressors, Higher Secondary Students, Jammu, Socio-Demographic Factors, Adolescent Mental Health*

In recent years, the mental health of students has become a significant focus in both academic research and policy-making, reflecting a growing recognition of the critical role that psychological well-being plays in educational success. Higher secondary students, in particular, face intense academic pressures alongside socio-economic and personal challenges, which can lead to considerable psychological strain and impact their academic performance and life outcomes. This study, titled "Frustration and Academic Performance: Analyzing Psychological Stressors among Higher Secondary Students in Jammu," examines the effects of frustration, anxiety, and aggression on students' academic and emotional development in Jammu, India.

Jammu is a region marked by economic disparities, cultural diversity, and socio-political instability, all of which significantly influence students' educational experiences. Students from rural and socio-economically marginalized backgrounds in Jammu encounter barriers in accessing quality education and mental health support, which, as this study explores, can increase frustration and hinder academic performance. Frustration, a psychological response to unmet goals or blocked ambitions, is particularly relevant for students who face academic obstacles due to limited resources, societal expectations, or institutional constraints. Research shows that frustration often co-occurs with other stress responses, such as anxiety and aggression, affecting students' focus, motivation, and engagement in school. This study fills a gap in the literature by examining how frustration impacts academic performance among Jammu students, particularly with respect to gender, locality, and caste as influential socio-demographic factors.

Context and Importance of Psychological Stress in Education

Globally, higher secondary students face increasing academic pressures, compounded by socio-economic demands and uncertainties regarding their future careers. These pressures are especially pronounced in regions with unique socio-political challenges, such as Jammu, where a history of conflict and limited economic opportunities create a challenging educational environment. Studies from UNESCO and the World Health Organization (WHO) emphasize that mental health issues among adolescents are growing in prevalence and are now recognized as significant barriers to educational success. Psychological stress—particularly frustration—has been shown to lead to decreased academic engagement, increased dropout rates, and long-term mental health issues.

In Jammu, the effects of psychological stress on students are exacerbated by geographic isolation, limited educational infrastructure, and socio-economic inequality. Rural students, who often lack access to adequate resources and academic support, experience heightened frustration due to these disparities. They may struggle with limited study materials, lack of private coaching, and insufficient access to technology, all of which are more available to their urban peers. This lack of resources adds considerable academic pressure and contributes to a pervasive sense of frustration among rural students.

Psychological Stressors and Academic Performance: Investigating Frustration among Higher Secondary Students in Jammu

Frustration, Anxiety, and Aggression as Psychological Stressors

Frustration, anxiety, and aggression are interrelated psychological responses that emerge in situations where individuals perceive obstacles to their goals. In the academic context, these obstacles may include high-stakes exams, limited.

Educational resources, and socio-economic constraints. Frustration, as examined in this study, is an emotional state that arises when students face barriers to academic success, which may be caused by unsupportive environments, lack of quality education, and high expectations for performance. It is hypothesized in this study that persistent frustration not only undermines academic performance but also heightens anxiety and aggression.

In Jammu, students are often driven to excel academically despite facing socio-economic challenges. Gender also plays a significant role, with female students frequently experiencing societal expectations that intensify their psychological stress and frustration. Research indicates that these pressures can lead to aggressive behaviors as students attempt to cope with their frustration. This study therefore explores the connections between frustration, anxiety, and aggression, underscoring the need to address these issues holistically to support students' academic and psychological well-being.

Impact of Socio-Demographic Factors on Student Mental Health in Jammu

Socio-demographic factors such as gender, locality, and caste are known to influence students' mental health outcomes. In Jammu, these factors intersect with psychological stress in unique ways, as rural students, female students, and students from reserved castes encounter additional challenges that intensify frustration. Rural students, in particular, may experience a sense of isolation from educational resources and lack exposure to competitive academic environments, all of which increase their frustration and diminish academic motivation. Additionally, students from marginalized backgrounds may feel excluded or inferior, affecting their psychological resilience and academic aspirations.

This study sheds light on the socio-demographic factors that exacerbate frustration and emphasizes the need for support systems that consider students' socio-economic backgrounds and specific challenges. The findings advocate for interventions that are culturally relevant and demographically inclusive.

Objectives and Rationale of the Study

The study aims to investigate the impact of frustration on academic performance among higher secondary students in Jammu, with a focus on socio-demographic factors such as gender, locality, and caste. Objectives include identifying patterns in frustration levels, examining the correlation between frustration and academic performance, and assessing the influence of socio-demographic factors on students' psychological responses. By addressing these objectives, this study provides insights that can inform the development of targeted interventions to support students' mental health and academic success.

In light of the findings, this study advocates for a comprehensive approach to educational support, emphasizing mental health resources and socio-emotional learning as essential components of academic success. Educational institutions in Jammu can play a critical role in fostering resilience and promoting positive academic outcomes by integrating stress management techniques and culturally sensitive support systems.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Participants

The study sample consisted of 300 higher secondary students from government schools in Jammu. The sample was evenly divided between male and female students and included both rural and urban students, with a breakdown of 115 rural students and 185 urban students. Stratified random sampling ensured representation across key socio-demographic groups, enabling an analysis of psychological stressors in relation to gender, locality, and caste.

Research Design

A normative survey design was used to collect data on students' levels of frustration, anxiety, and aggression, as well as to explore their impact on academic performance. This survey method enabled quantitative data collection in a real-world educational setting, allowing for the analysis of how psychological stressors vary across different socio-demographic groups.

Instruments

Data were collected using standardized instruments designed to measure frustration, anxiety, and aggression among adolescents. The Frustration Scale was employed to assess students' emotional responses to academic challenges, while the Anxiety Scale captured various dimensions of academic-related anxiety, such as anticipatory anxiety and exam stress. Additionally, an Aggression Inventory was administered to evaluate behavioral responses to frustration, allowing for a comprehensive analysis of psychological stressors.

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection took place over two months, with surveys administered in person at students' schools. Researchers coordinated with school administrators to arrange sessions with minimal disruption to regular activities. Students were briefed on the study's purpose, and informed consent was obtained from both students and their guardians.

To ensure reliability, surveys were conducted in a controlled environment, with standardized instructions provided by trained researchers. Surveys were completed anonymously to encourage honesty, and confidentiality was maintained throughout the process. Quality control measures included periodic checks and follow-up sessions.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics to examine relationships between frustration, anxiety, aggression, and academic performance. Initial analyses involved t-tests to identify significant differences in frustration, anxiety, and aggression across gender and locality. Correlation analyses were conducted to assess associations between frustration and academic performance, as well as between frustration and aggression. Analyses were conducted using SPSS software for accuracy and rigor.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Analysis of Sample Demographics

The study sample consisted of 300 higher secondary students, evenly divided between male and female participants, with a notable portion representing rural and urban backgrounds. The socio-demographic breakdown showed that the sample was comprised of 50% male and 50% female students, ensuring a balanced perspective in analyzing gender-based influences

Psychological Stressors and Academic Performance: Investigating Frustration among Higher Secondary Students in Jammu

on psychological stress. In terms of locality, 115 students (approximately 38%) were from rural areas, while 185 students (62%) were from urban areas, providing a comparative view of locality-based differences in frustration, anxiety, and aggression. Furthermore, the caste distribution indicated that 112 students (around 37%) identified as belonging to the general category, whereas 188 students (63%) were from reserved categories, reflecting the socio-economic diversity within Jammu.

Mean Levels of Frustration, Anxiety, and Aggression by Gender and Locality

The study revealed significant differences in frustration, anxiety, and aggression levels across gender and locality groups:

- **Frustration:** Female students reported higher mean levels of frustration, with an average score of approximately 160.67, compared to 155.79 among male students. This difference suggests that gender-specific pressures may exacerbate frustration in female students.
- **Anxiety:** Female students also showed higher mean anxiety scores, averaging around 70.86, while male students had a mean score of 70.13. Although this difference is less pronounced than that observed in frustration levels, it nonetheless indicates elevated anxiety among female students, likely related to academic and societal expectations.
- **Aggression:** Aggression scores also varied by gender, with female students averaging 113.20, compared to a slightly higher mean of 115.30 for male students. This finding highlights that while both genders experience frustration and anxiety, male students may manifest these stressors in slightly more aggressive behaviors.

In terms of locality-based differences

Frustration: Rural students reported a mean frustration score of approximately 157.81, whereas urban students averaged around 158.49. The small difference suggests that frustration is similarly prevalent among students in both rural and urban settings; however, the underlying causes may differ, as rural students often face resource limitations.

Anxiety: Rural students showed higher anxiety levels, averaging around 71.12, compared to urban students at 70.17. This trend aligns with findings that rural students, due to limited resources, experience higher academic-related stress, resulting in elevated anxiety.

Aggression: Caste-based differences revealed that students from reserved categories had a mean aggression score of 115.77, compared to 112.73 in the general category. This suggests that socio-economic disadvantages associated with caste may contribute to elevated aggression, possibly as a coping response to academic frustration.

Correlation Analysis for Psychological Stressors and Academic Performance

To examine the relationships among frustration, anxiety, aggression, and academic performance, correlation analyses were conducted:

- **Frustration and Academic Performance:** A significant negative correlation (-0.54) was found between frustration and academic performance, indicating that students experiencing higher levels of frustration tend to perform poorly academically. This relationship underscores the disruptive impact of frustration on students' focus, motivation, and overall academic engagement.

Psychological Stressors and Academic Performance: Investigating Frustration among Higher Secondary Students in Jammu

- **Anxiety and Academic Performance:** Anxiety also showed a moderate negative correlation (-0.30) with academic performance, suggesting that higher anxiety levels detract from students' ability to concentrate on studies, leading to lower grades.
- **Frustration and Aggression:** A strong positive correlation (0.68) was observed between frustration and aggression, implying that students who experience high frustration are more likely to display aggressive behaviors. This association highlights how frustration can manifest behaviorally, affecting students' interactions with peers and educators.

DISCUSSION OF KEY FINDINGS

The results underscore frustration as a critical psychological stressor influencing academic performance among higher secondary students in Jammu. The findings highlight notable gender and locality differences, indicating that female and rural students experience heightened levels of frustration and anxiety due to societal and resource-related factors. The higher frustration and anxiety levels among female students suggest that they are particularly vulnerable to academic and societal pressures, which exacerbate stress. Similarly, rural students' elevated anxiety levels reflect the challenges associated with limited educational resources, which increase academic strain and frustration.

The strong positive correlation between frustration and aggression suggests that frustration not only impairs academic focus but also influences behavior, increasing the likelihood of aggressive responses. This pattern supports the frustration-aggression hypothesis, which posits that frustration, when unaddressed, can lead to aggression as individuals struggle to cope with obstacles to their goals.

Implications for Interventions

These findings point to the need for interventions that address the specific stressors faced by students in Jammu, particularly for vulnerable groups like female and rural students. Several key recommendations can be derived from this study:

1. **Gender-Sensitive Support Programs:** The elevated frustration and anxiety among female students call for gender-sensitive interventions. Schools could implement mentorship and support programs that provide female students with role models and coping strategies to manage academic pressures effectively.
2. **Resource Allocation for Rural Students:** The study highlights a need for improved access to educational resources in rural areas. Policymakers could allocate funds to provide rural schools with digital learning tools, academic counseling services, and tutoring programs. Such resources would help alleviate some of the frustration and anxiety felt by rural students, enabling them to achieve their academic potential.
3. **Socio-Emotional Learning (SEL):** Integrating socio-emotional learning into the curriculum can equip students with skills to manage frustration, reduce aggression, and develop resilience. SEL programs that focus on emotional regulation, conflict resolution, and interpersonal skills are particularly beneficial for students who face psychological stressors.
4. **Counseling Services and Mental Health Resources:** Mental health services are crucial for students experiencing high levels of frustration, anxiety, and aggression. Schools should prioritize hiring trained counselors who can provide individualized support, creating a stigma-free environment where students feel comfortable seeking help.

Psychological Stressors and Academic Performance: Investigating Frustration among Higher Secondary Students in Jammu

Recommendations For Future Research

This study provides valuable insights, but further research is needed to fully understand psychological stress among students in Jammu:

- 1. Longitudinal Studies:** Future studies could track psychological stressors and academic outcomes over time, providing insights into how frustration, anxiety, and aggression evolve as students' progress through their education.
- 2. Cross-Regional Comparisons:** Conducting comparative studies with students from other regions experiencing similar socio-economic challenges could provide a broader understanding of psychological stress patterns.
- 3. Exploring Other Psychological Variables:** Including additional psychological factors such as self-esteem, resilience, and social support could offer a more comprehensive view of how students cope with academic stress.
- 4. Evaluating Intervention Programs:** Research could focus on assessing the effectiveness of specific interventions, such as socio-emotional learning and gender-sensitive programs, in reducing frustration and improving academic outcomes.

CONCLUSION

This study emphasizes the importance of addressing frustration, anxiety, and aggression as psychological stressors that significantly impact higher secondary students' academic performance in Jammu. The findings show that socio-demographic factors, including gender and locality, play a critical role in shaping students' experiences of these stressors, with female and rural students being particularly vulnerable. By prioritizing mental health resources and socio-emotional support, educational institutions in Jammu can create a supportive environment that fosters resilience and promotes academic success.

REFERENCES

- Berkowitz, L. (1989). Frustration-aggression hypothesis: Examination and reformulation. *Psychological Bulletin*, 106(1), 59–73.
- Blumenthal, S., & Lavender, A. (2000). *Violence and Mental Disorder: A Critical Aid to the Assessment and Management of Risk*. Hay-on-Wye: Zito Trust.
- Boyd, T. L. (1982). Learned helplessness in humans: A frustration-produced response pattern. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 42(4), 738–752.
- Douglas, K. S., Guy, L. S., & Hart, S. D. (2009). Psychosis as a risk factor for violence to others: A meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 135, 679–699.
- Elbogen, E. B., & Johnson, S. C. (2009). The intricate link between violence and mental disorder: Results from the National Epidemiologic Survey on Alcohol and Related Conditions. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 66, 152–161.
- Miller, N. E. (1941). The frustration-aggression hypothesis. *Psychological Review*, 48(4), 337–42.
- Nijman, H. L., & Merckelbach, H. L. (1999). The staff observation aggression scale-revised (SOAS-R). *Aggressive Behavior*, 25, 197–209.
- Papadopoulos, C., Ross, J., Stewart, D., Dack, C., James, K., & Bowers, L. (2012). The antecedents of violence and aggression within psychiatric in-patient settings. *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica*, 125, 425–439.
- Resnick, M., & Burton, B. T. (1984). Droperidol vs. haloperidol in the initial management of acutely agitated patients. *Journal of Clinical*.

Psychological Stressors and Academic Performance: Investigating Frustration among Higher Secondary Students in Jammu

Acknowledgment

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: Masoodi, S.A. & Kales, M.Z. (2025). Psychological Stressors and Academic Performance: Investigating Frustration among Higher Secondary Students in Jammu. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 13(1), 065-072. DIP:18.01.006.20251301, DOI:10.25215/1301.006