

## Relationship between Academic Stress and Self-efficacy among NEET aspirants

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### ABSTRACT

This study evaluated the effect of academic stress on self-efficacy among NEET aspirants in and around Mangalore (Dakshina Kannada District) of Karnataka state. The sample consisted of an equal number of boys (100) and girls (100) aged between 16 and 20 years and was chosen from 4 different Pre-University colleges. The aspirants completed the Academic stress inventory (Lin & Chen, 2009) and the student self-efficacy (Dahiya & Kumari, 2018) scale. Pearson's product-moment correlation was employed to find out the significant relationship between academic stress and self-efficacy. One-way ANOVA was employed to find the effect of various dimensions of self-efficacy on NEET aspirants with varied levels of academic stress. Result of the correlation revealed that there is a significant negative relationship between academic stress and self-efficacy, with  $r$  value of  $-0.646$  which was found highly significant at the 0.001 level. As the academic stress increased, self-efficacy decreased linearly and significantly and vice-versa. The results of One-way ANOVA reveal that the low, moderate and high levels of academic stress of NEET aspirants will differ significantly in various domains of self-efficacy: physical self-efficacy, social self-efficacy, emotional self-efficacy, academic self-efficacy and spirituality self-efficacy. Implication of the findings of the study have been delineated.

**Keywords:** *Academic stress, Self-efficacy, NEET aspirants*

**S**tress is most commonly spoken word among the adolescents in the recent days. People say that they are under stress and attributing all problems around them to stress. A few may consider stress as stimulus, at times more, sometimes less complex, for others it is inferred as inner state and for others it is an observable response to stimulus or situation. Selye (1976), defined that stress is the non-specific response to any demand. Any condition that places a special demand upon a person tends to cause stress. Lazarus and Folkman (1984), defined that stress is an internal state which can be caused by physical demands on an individual, the body or by environmental and social situations which are considered as potentially harmful, uncontrollable or exceeding our resources for coping. Academic stress is a form of stress that is always experienced by the students in relation to academics. Hann

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Received: April 16, 2025; Revision Received: August 06, 2025; Accepted: August 10, 2025

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(1977), in his view said that “When an individual is not able to handle emotionally changed demands relating to educational needs, is said to be in a state of academic stress.” Polk (2001), enlisted many components of academic stress which may contribute towards academic failure in adolescents. They included boredoms, conflicts with teachers, low self-concept, inadequate social skills, non-facilitative school and classroom environment, unsuccessful transaction from one school to another, lack of parental involvement, stress and pressure in family and peer relationship, teacher’s expectations and beliefs, sense of alienation and isolation and differing culture and gender expectations. Thus, such components may lead to academic failure, which may further cause academic stress among the students. Gupta and Khan (1987), opined that academic stress is a mental stress with respect to some anticipated frustration, associated with academic failure or even an awareness of possibility of such failure. which are prescribed by the school. Academic stress can be measured. Academic stress is of concern because it has a negative effect on the physical, emotional, social and psychological development of students (Omizo and Suzuki, 1988). Prolonged academic stress may make a student disoriented and may result in stress related health problems. In Indian studies, academic problems and stress were reported to be associated with deliberate self-harm, drug abuse and school dropouts (Logaraj *et. al.*, 2005, Guar *et. al.* 2001). In general academic stress can be observed by teachers among the students community. Nowadays parents are talking about the academic stress felt by their wards. A good number of parents take their children to counsellors in the name of academic stress. Youngsters use this word very frequently.

Self-efficacy is the self-perception of an individual's capabilities to act. It refers to one's own beliefs in one's competence to exercise control over one's own functioning and surroundings in daily life. The concept of self-efficacy was introduced by Bandura (1977) for the first time. Bandura stated self-efficacy in terms of subjective judgements of one's ability to perform a task in a specific domain. It is the set of beliefs that people hold about their capabilities and what they can achieve with the help of those capabilities, rather than personal judgement about their physical and psychological characteristics. Medenick (1982), stated self-efficacy as a belief or expectation that one can successfully bring about change, people with expectations are more likely to take risks, set more difficult goals, persist very longer at chosen activities and be more involved in what they are doing. Students do have a set of goals in their lives that they wish to attain successfully. For a few the path of achieving them may be full of challenges and difficulties. Students’ sense of self-efficacy plays a significant role in determining how goals are identified and approached (Bandura, 1995). Efficacious students are more likely to work hard and achieve their goals. They do suffer from failures but recover quickly from setbacks and disappointments. Their perception of failure is totally different and consider these failures as opportunities or room for improvement. On the other hand, students with low self-efficacy lack self-confidence, focus on personal limitations and failures, and avoid leaving their comfort zones, view challenging tasks as beyond their capabilities. Strong self-efficacy leads to perseverance, positive self-regard and positive wellbeing while a poor sense of efficacy can predict depression and distress which hinder proper functioning and magnify the severity of stressful events (Bandura and Ramachandran, 1994).

A good number of adolescents in India do have a burning desire of being a doctor. Parents imbibe this desire among children from primitive years. These adolescents after completing their Secondary exam join for Science stream in the Senior Secondary level with Physics, Chemistry and Biology as their optional subjects in various boards across India. National Testing Agency (NTA) conducts National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET) a single entrance examination once a year for aspirants who wish to be doctors and for a few other medical professions across India. The preparation becomes so hectic because it covers the

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portion from both first and second year of Senior Secondary class from Physics, Chemistry and Biology. Majority of the questions are in Higher Order Thinking level. A good number of aspirants are repeating this exam because one can go with any number of attempts. The desire to be a doctor is so intense among these students and they repeat for the second, third and fourth time. After achieving the required score out of 720, one can join for Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS) and Bachelor of Dentistry (BDS) etc. To get a good score they enroll for professional coaching in different cities by staying in a hostel, paying guest or with relatives at times with parents. A total of 23 lakh plus students competes for only one lakh seats. The worry about the tuff competition causes a havoc among these aspirants resulting in high level of academic stress and they encounter a good number of psychological problems like anxiety, depression and at times with suicidal tendencies etc. A few who cannot manage these problems consult counsellors at times the Psychiatrists. Managing personal expectations and high parental expectations for these aspirants is a big concern. A lot of financial burden is also involved from the side of parents on account of coaching. The financial aspect is also a contributing factor for academic stress. These aspects effect the health and well-being of all the aspirants up to a certain extent.

The present study was chosen to explore the relation between academic stress and self-efficacy among NEET aspirants.

### METHODOLOGY

#### *Sample*

The sample for the present study consisted of 200 students (both male and female) from Pre-university colleges undergoing NEET coaching in and around Mangalore. In this study equal number of male and female students' age ranging from 16 to 20, were selected as participants.

#### *Tools*

- 1. Demographic Sheet:** The first part was designed to collect preliminary information regarding details of the aspirants like Name, age, gender, staying with parents/hostel/relatives/paying guest and socio- economic status etc.
- 2. Academic stress Inventory of students:** The Academic stress inventory by Lin and Chen (2006) consists of 34 statements to evaluate the students' level of academic stress. Each item is scored by using a five-point Likert scale alternatives vis Completely Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Completely Disagree. It covers the level to which academic stress affects the students' life. The stress factors like Teachers stress, results stress, tests stress, studying in groups stress, peer stress, time management stress and self-inflicted stress are the factors in which the score is calculated. The minimum score obtained will be 34 and the maximum is 170. The higher the score the higher the level of academic stress. Students who score  $\leq 57$  indicate lower level of academic stress. The scores ranging from 58 to 114 indicate moderate level of academic stress and the scores from 115 to 170 indicate high level of academic stress. The alpha value for the overall reliability for this inventory was 0.90.
- 3. Student Self-efficacy scale:** The student self-efficacy scale developed by Dahiya and Kumari (2018), consists of 35 statements to evaluate the students' level of self-efficacy in the dimensions of physical self-efficacy, academic self-efficacy, social self-efficacy, emotional self-efficacy and spirituality self-efficacy. Each item is scored using a five point Likert scale (5= "strongly agree", 4= "Agree", 3 = "Neutral", 2= "Disagree" and 1= "strongly disagree"). Students who score  $\leq 132$  indicate lower level of self-efficacy. The scores ranging from 133 to 145 indicate average level of

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self-efficacy and the scores from 146 and above indicate high level of student self-efficacy. The alpha value for the overall reliability for this scale is 0.863.

### Procedure

The researcher personally visited the selected Pre-University colleges in and around Mangalore. Obtained permission from the respective principals by producing the permission letter from the University and administered the above tools among 200 NEET aspirants. Before administering the test, the aspirants were briefed about the purpose of research and they were assured about maintaining confidentiality. They were asked to answer all the questions. The instructions were read out and each item in the scale were explained in order to get a clear and accurate response. Once the data were collected, they were scored and fed in to the computer system. The data were analysed by using Pearson's - product moment correlation and one-way ANOVA.

**Table 1, Result of Pearson's product moment correlation between Academic stress and Self-efficacy**

Variable 1	Variable 2	Correlation coefficient	df	P value
Academic stress	Self-efficacy	-0.646	198	.001

### Academic stress and self-efficacy

Between academic stress and self-efficacy, a significant negative relationship was observed, r value of -0.646 was found to be highly significant at .001 level. As the academic stress increased, self-efficacy also decreased linearly and significantly and vice-versa.

**Table 2, NEET Aspirants with different levels of Academic stress will differ significantly in Self-efficacy.**

Mean scores on various domains of self-efficacy of NEET aspirants with varied levels of academic stress and results of One-way ANOVA

Domains of self-efficacy	Levels of academic stress	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F value	P value
Physical self-efficacy	Low	7	31.29	3.30	13.591	.001
	Moderate	92	28.45	3.98		
	High	101	25.98	3.81		
	Total	200	27.30	4.11		
Social self-efficacy	Low	7	30.29	2.43	17.592	.001
	Moderate	92	26.68	3.43		
	High	101	24.03	4.17		
	Total	200	25.47	4.10		
Emotional self-efficacy	Low	7	32.43	1.62	24.150	.001
	Moderate	92	26.82	3.99		
	High	101	23.92	3.98		
	Total	200	25.55	4.36		
Academic self-efficacy	Low	7	44.14	2.61	37.035	.001
	Moderate	92	39.90	4.57		
	High	101	34.73	4.84		
	Total	200	37.44	5.45		
	Low	7	18.71	1.60		

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Spirituality self-efficacy	Moderate	92	16.14	3.20	14.453	.001
	High	101	14.22	2.93		
	Total	200	15.26	3.22		
Total self-efficacy	Low	7	156.86	1.68	85.925	.001
	Moderate	92	137.99	10.44		
	High	101	122.88	9.06		
	Total	200	131.02	13.07		

#### Physical self-efficacy:

The mean Physical self-efficacy scores of the NEET aspirants with low, moderate and high levels of academic stress were found to be, 31.29, 28.45 and 25.98 respectively. One-way ANOVA revealed a significant mean difference with F value of 13.591 and significance level of .001 level. As the levels of academic stress increased, mean self-efficacy scores also decreased significantly.

#### Social self-efficacy:

The mean social self-efficacy scores of the NEET aspirants with low, moderate and high levels of academic stress were found to be, 30.29, 26.68 and 24.03 respectively. One-way ANOVA revealed a significant mean difference with F value of 17.592 and significance level of .001 level. As the levels of academic stress increased, mean self-efficacy scores also decreased significantly.

#### Emotional self-efficacy:

The mean emotional self-efficacy scores of the NEET aspirants with low, moderate and high level of academic stress were found to be, 32.43, 26.82 and 23.92 respectively. One-way ANOVA revealed a significant mean difference with F value of 24.150 and significance level of .001 level. As the levels of academic stress increased, mean self-efficacy scores also decreased significantly.

#### Academic self-efficacy:

The mean academic self-efficacy scores of the NEET aspirants with low, moderate and high level of academic stress were found to be, 44.14, 39.90 and 34.73 respectively. One-way ANOVA revealed a significant mean difference with F value of 37.035 and significance level of .001 level. As the levels of academic stress increased, mean self-efficacy scores also decreased significantly.

#### Spirituality self-efficacy:

The mean Spirituality self-efficacy scores of the NEET aspirants with low, moderate and high level of academic stress were found to be, 18.71, 16.14 and 14.22 respectively. One-way ANOVA revealed a significant mean difference with F value of 14.453 and significance level of .001 level. As the levels of academic stress increased, mean self-efficacy scores also decreased significantly.

#### Total self-efficacy:

The mean self-efficacy scores of the NEET aspirants with low, moderate and high level of academic stress were found to be, 156.86, 137.99 and 122.88 respectively. One-way ANOVA revealed a significant mean difference with F value of 85.925 and significance level of .001 level. As the levels of academic stress increased, mean self-efficacy scores also decreased significantly.

## DISCUSSION

### *Major findings of the study are*

Between academic stress and self-efficacy, a significant and negative relationship was observed. As the academic stress increased, self-efficacy also decreased linearly and significantly and vice-versa.

The result of the present study clearly indicated that as the levels of academic stress is increased, self-efficacy scores in various domains of physical self-efficacy social self-efficacy, emotional self-efficacy, academic self-efficacy and spirituality self-efficacy and decreased linearly and significantly.

The above findings revealed a significant association between academic stress and self-efficacy among the NEET aspirants. The result of the present study further clearly indicated that as the levels of academic stress increased, self-efficacy scores in various domains like physical self-efficacy, social self-efficacy, emotional self-efficacy, academic self-efficacy and spirituality self-efficacy decreased linearly and significantly. Most of the studies conducted earlier have shown that self-efficacy is negatively associated with academic stress. Kordzanganeh *et al.* (2022), carried out a correlational-descriptive study on the mediating role of self-efficacy beliefs with a relationship between family emotional climate, Time management and Academic Stress among 222 university students from Iran. The study revealed a negative correlation between self-efficacy and academic stress ( $\beta = -0.15$ ,  $P = 0.001$ ). Salami *et al.* (2021), investigated the effect of perceived academic stress and depression on self-efficacy beliefs among university students studying online. One hundred twenty-three participants from two public Universities in Peninsula Malaysia participated. Pearson correlation test revealed a low and negative correlation between general self-efficacy and stress ( $r = -.269$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Abid *et al.* (2021), conducted a study on Academic stress, Psychological Distress, Coping and Self-efficacy among undergraduate University students during Covid-19. The sample of the research was 302 undergraduate students (males=95 and females=207) and the age ranging from 18 years to 25 years from the city of Karachi, Pakistan. The study revealed correlation between self-efficacy and academic stress and has found to be ( $r = -.298$ ,  $p = .000$ ) which is significant but weak. Fariborz *et al.* (2019), conducted a study to find the relationship between the students' academic stress, stress response and academic burnout with the mediating role of self-efficacy. A total of 361 students (177 females and 184 males) were selected through multi-stage cluster sampling. The findings showed that self-efficacy had a negative and significant effect on academic stress. In a study Ye *et al.* (2018), examined the relationship between academic stress and academic self-efficacy. The study also verified the moderating effects of gender on this relationship. The sample consisted of 695 Chinese high school students (54% female). The study was conducted over a period of two academic years. The results revealed that students' academic stress was negatively related to their academic self-efficacy. Arslan (2017), conducted a study to find the relationship between emotional self-efficacy and educational stress with a structural equation model. Sample consisted of 232 secondary school students from Turkey. The study revealed a negative correlation between emotional self-efficacy and educational stress. Keshi (2014), conducted a study on the relationship between academic stress with depression, self-efficacy and academic performance among high school students. Using random stratified sampling technique 120 students. The result showed a negative significant correlation ( $r = 0.78$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) between academic stress and self-efficacy. Mc Kay *et al.* (2014), performed a cross-sectional study to investigate gender differences on various domains of stress, self-esteem and self-efficacy beliefs (academic, social and emotional) as well as the association between stress, self-esteem and self-efficacy. The sample consisted of 610 adolescents from the United

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Kingdom. The results revealed that girls had significantly higher mean scores on seven out of ten on various domains of stress. Females also scored significantly lower on self-esteem, and social self-efficacy, but higher scores on emotional self-efficacy. Regression analyses clearly demonstrated differential relationships between self-efficacy domains and stress domains. Madnani and Pradhan (2013), examined self-efficacy as predictors of academic stress among senior secondary students from CBSE and ICSE board located in Lucknow. Results revealed a significant negative correlation between all dimensions of self-efficacy and academic stress. Pinugu (2013), sought to if there are significant associations among self-efficacy, academic stress and academic satisfaction. The study was conducted among 198(102 females and 96 males) students enrolled in basic courses at Mapua Institute of Technology, Indonesia. The mean for the ages was 17.8. It is observed that self-efficacy is negatively associated with academic stress.

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### **Acknowledgment**

The authors profoundly appreciate all the people who have successfully contributed ensuring this paper is in place. Their contributions are acknowledged however their names cannot be mentioned.

### **Conflict of Interest**

The authors colourfully declare this paper to bear not a conflict of interest.

**How to cite this article:** Pushparaj, B. & Mahadevaswamy, P. (2025). Relationship between Academic Stress and Self-efficacy among NEET aspirants. *International Journal of Indian Psychology, 13*(3), 1802-1809. DIP:18.01.165.20251303, DOI:10.25215/1303.165