

Academic stress and self-esteem among rural and urban adolescents

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■ **ABSTRACT** : Academic stress is a mental distress with respect to some anticipated frustration associated with academic failure or even awareness of the possibility of such failure. Self-esteem is that subjective judgment by which people make their potential to face life's challenges to recognize, understand and also solve the problems, and their right to achieving happiness, and be given respect. The study was undertaken in rural and urban area of Haryana state. Hisar district and village Kharkara was taken in order to meet the sample requirement *i.e.* 50 adolescents from rural area and 50 from urban area thus making a total sample of 100 adolescents ranging in 16-18 years of age group. The scale used for the study was academic stress scale by Rao (2012) used to assess academic stress and self-esteem inventory by Prasad and Thakur (1977). The finding elucidates that maximum number of respondents have moderate level of academic stress and found significant difference in both rural and urban area. Data regards to self-esteem found that maximum respondents have positive level of self-esteem followed by balanced level and self-esteem was significantly and negatively correlated with academic stress.

■ **KEY WORDS**: Academic stress, Self-esteem

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Adolescence is a transitional stage from childhood to adulthood and is a time of major changes in all areas of functioning. Children and adolescents can experience various life stresses ranging from terrible or traumatic life events to persistent strain and daily irritation. Academic matters are the most important sources of chronic and sporadic stress for young people in both Western and Asian countries and has significant associations with mental health problems, such as depression, anxiety and suicide.

Academic stress is a mental distress with respect

to some anticipated frustration associated with academic failure or even awareness of the possibility of such failure. It pervades the life of students and tends to impact adversely their mental and physical health and their ability to perform school work effectively. This shadow of academic stress more darkens for the students of high and intermediate schools as they have to enter into the world of competition for choosing their respective careers.

Academic stress is a significant source of stress for many students (Hashim, 2003). If a student is unable

to cope effectively with academic stress, then serious psycho-social-emotional health consequences may result (Scott, 2008). The education system in India is highly competitive due to inadequate number of good institutions to educate the ever expanding population of children. As a result, children begin to face pressure of competition from the entry level of pre-primary education and thereafter at the end of every year, in the form of examinations that determine their promotion to the next grade.

Self-esteem is a most important key to success in life. The development of healthy self-esteem is enormously important for better adjustment in society. Self-esteem is that subjective judgment by which people make their potential to face life's challenges to recognize, understand and also solve the problems, and their right to achieving happiness, and be given respect. It is the judgement of oneself and attitude toward the self. Self-esteem is very essential because it works in a way that how you think, acts and even how you relate to other people. It is an individual's point of view about him or herself, which involve evaluation of self along with positive as well as negative aspects. Care givers have focused the efforts to uplift the level of self-esteem, relating that high self-esteem helps in the positive benefits and outcomes including the higher academic achievement (Baumeister *et al.*, 2003). Self-esteem is a basic human tool to fulfil our needs; it is feeling of a person about him or her that affects the mode of viewing him or her. These views are group of self-observations, received feelings about him or her and self-awareness.

There are many numerous ways that are used to define self-esteem. Mruk (2006) stated that evaluation and affect are two psychological processes that are used most commonly. Evaluation highlights the role of cognition, whereas affect emphasizes the role of emotions and feelings because they concern to self-esteem. Mruk also described the four basic ways for self-esteem: first, a certain attitude or point of view; second, a psychological response that a person holds toward the self; third, based on discrepancy, and fourth, a function of character and personality.

Hinkelman and Luzzo (2007) examined that the strict demands of the academic curriculum and institutions make it hard at times for the students to cope with variety of stresses and have pointed out that it is necessary to understand the power of various interactive variables

within the present day educational context to ensure successful interventions.

Rao (2008) concluded that students of 12th class from Chennai (India) reported feeling of stress, high rates of depression and very high level of anxiety. Almost all of the students outlined stress related with 12th standard. In addition, significant differences were found in academic anxiety of male and female students (Gupta *et al.*, 2011), different personality types and private and government school students.

Pecora (2012) stated that poor performance at school affected foster care children whether they lived in a foster care placement, kinship care, or group home. This performance can also be impacted by enrollment problems, educational instability and lower test scores.

Puar (2012) investigated on high school students and a significant and negative correlation was found between anxiety and academic achievement and significant and positive correlation was found between social maturity and academic achievement. Singh and Upadhyay (2013) found personality dimensions as predictors of academic stress and revealed neuroticism scores to be significantly and positively related with academic stress in female but not in male students. However, no significant relation found between academic stress and extraversion scores in male and female.

Hosogi *et al.* (2012) conducted a study on importance and usefulness of evaluating self-esteem in children. These authors reported that self-esteem is the "feeling of self-appreciation" and is an essential emotion for people to adjust to society and live their lives. The environment in which children are raised contributes profoundly to the development of positive self-esteem. Children with damaged or low self-esteem are at risk of developing psychological problems, then it is difficult to recover from low self-esteem.

Orth *et al.* (2015) in a longitudinal study with a large sample from Germany examined the development of self-esteem across the life span. Growth curve analyses indicated that self-esteem follows a quadratic path across the life span, increasing during adolescence, young adulthood, and middle adulthood, reaching a peak at age 60 years, and then declining in old age. No cohort effects on average levels of self-esteem or on the shape of the trajectory were found.

Hosseini *et al.* (2016) conducted a study on self-esteem among students. Study revealed that high self-

esteem was found in majority of the respondents.

Baumeister and Vohs (2018) mentioned that high initiative and feeling good are benefits of high self-esteem. These authors suggested that psychological studies lost some credibility by advocating efforts to raise self-esteem based on correlational results. Self-report data are one of the weaknesses in self-esteem research.

Objectives:

- To study the academic stress among adolescents
- To assess the self-esteem of adolescents
- To examine the relationship between socio-economic variables and self-esteem with academic stress

■ RESEARCH METHODS

Sample:

Haryana State was selected as the locale for the present investigation. Further Hisar city and village Kharkara was selected for sample. Random sampling procedure was followed to have the sample of the population. A list of schools of Hisar city and village Kharkara was prepared from the list one school *i.e.* Government Sr. Sec. School was taken randomly from urban area as well as from rural area to have data on adolescents. Further a list of adolescents studying in 10+1 and 10+2 (16-18 years) was prepared from each school of urban and rural area. From the list a sample of 50 adolescents (25 from 10+1 and 25 from 10+2) were randomly taken from rural as well as urban area thus making a total sample of 100 adolescents *i.e.* 50 from rural area and 50 from urban area.

Tools used:

Data regarding personal and socio-economic variables with the help of self-structured questionnaire and academic stress was assessed by academic stress scale by Rao (2012) and self-esteem by self-esteem inventory by Prasad and Thakur (1977).

■ RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results obtained from the present investigation as well as relevant discussion have been summarized under following heads :

Personal and socio-economic profile of respondents:

This section of the chapter deals with the personal

and socio-economic profile of the respondents. The personal information included age, sex, ordinal position, education of father and mother, occupation of father and mother, caste, type and size of family and annual income of the family.

The personal and socio-economic profile of the respondents has been clearly explained to bring out their characteristics results in Table 1. The inspection of data in table depict that out of the total sample, 52 per cent of respondents were in the age range of 17-18 years, while area wise comparison show that 28 per cent of rural respondents were in 17-18 years while 26 per cent of urban respondents were in 16-17 years of age group.

With regards to ordinal position of respondents, out of total sample maximum respondents (5%) were found at first ordinal position followed by 29 per cent at 2nd ordinal position. Results further represent that 24 per cent of respondents were at 3rd ordinal position and very less percentage (12%) were at 4th position of birth order.

Figures pertaining to paternal education revealed that out of total sample 42 per cent of respondent's fathers were educated upto secondary/higher secondary level followed by 21 per cent educated upto graduate/postgraduate level. Comparative results depict that in rural area a good percentage of fathers (15%) were illiterate than urban respondents (4%). Further results highlighted that more percentage of respondent's fathers (22% and 20%) were educated upto secondary /higher secondary level in urban and rural area, respectively.

Regarding mother's education results underline that 33 per cent respondent's mothers were educated up to secondary/ higher secondary level followed by 29 per cent upto primary and middle level. Further comparison of rural and urban area highlighted that 24 per cent of rural respondent's mothers were illiterate against 4 per cent illiterate mothers in urban area.

Regarding father's occupation, results characterize that on total sample, 43 per cent fathers were engaged in farming followed by 31 per cent in service. Further in rural area maximum number of respondent's fathers (32%) were engaged in farming while in urban area maximum respondent's fathers were engaged in service (21%).

An overview of maternal occupational pattern highlighted that the majority of the respondent's mothers were homemaker in both rural and urban area (76%).

With regards to caste distribution results depict that

Table 1 : Personal and socio- economic profile of respondents				(n=100)
Sr. No.	Variables	Rural (n=50)	Urban (n=50)	Total
1.	Age			
	16-17 years	22(11.0)	26(13.0)	48(48.0)
	17-18 years	28(14.0)	24(12.0)	52(52.0)
2.	Sex			
	Male	25(12.5)	25(12.5)	50(50.0)
	Female	25(12.5)	25(12.5)	50(50.0)
3.	Ordinal position			
	First	19(9.5)	16(8.0)	35(35.0)
	Second	18(9.0)	11(10.5)	29(29.0)
	Third	11(5.5)	13(6.5)	24(24.0)
	Fourth	02(1.0)	10(5.0)	12(12.0)
4.	Education of father			
	Illiterate	15(7.5)	4(2.0)	19(19.0)
	Primary and middle	8(4.0)	10(5.0)	18(18.0)
	Secondary/ higher secondary	20(10.0)	22(11.0)	42(42.0)
	Graduate/ Postgraduate	7(3.5)	14(7.0)	21(21.0)
5.	Education of mother			
	Illiterate	24(12.0)	4(2.0)	28(28.0)
	Primary and middle	12(6.0)	17(8.5)	29(29.0)
	Secondary/ higher secondary	10(5.0)	23(11.5)	33(33.0)
	Graduate/ Postgraduate	4(2.0)	6(3.0)	10(10.0)
6.	Occupation of father			
	Labour	6(3.0)	8(4.0)	14(14.0)
	Farmer	32(16.0)	11(5.5)	43(43.0)
	Service	10(5.0)	21(10.5)	31(31.0)
	Business	2(1.0)	10(5.0)	12(12.0)
7.	Occupation of mother			
	Home-maker	41(20.5)	35(17.5)	76(76.0)
	Labour	4(2.0)	7(3.5)	8(8.0)
	Service	5(2.5)	8(4.0)	12(12.0)
8.	Caste			
	Schedule cast/Tribe	8(4.0)	14(7.0)	22(22.0)
	Backward Class	17(8.5)	16(8.0)	33(33.0)
	General	25(12.5)	20(10.0)	45(45.0)
9.	Type of family			
	Nuclear	30(15.0)	40(20.0)	70(70.0)
	Joint	20(10.0)	10(5.0)	30(30.0)
10.	Size of family			
	Small (1-4)	27(13.5)	31(15.5)	58(58.0)
	Medium (5-6)	15(7.5)	12(6.0)	27(27.0)
	Large (7 and above)	8(4.0)	7(3.5)	15(15.0)
11.	Annual income (Rs.)			
	10000-50000	10(5.0)	7(3.5)	17(17.0)
	50000-1 lac	14(7.0)	16(8.0)	30(30.0)
	1- 10 lac	19(9.5)	23(11.5)	42(42.0)
	Above 10 lac	7(3.5)	4(2.0)	11(11.0)

Note: Figures in parentheses indicate percentage

45 per cent of the respondents were from general caste category followed by 33 per cent of respondents from backward caste and only 22 per cent were from schedule caste/Tribe caste category.

As far as family type is concerned, result presented in table portrays that majority of the respondents (70%) belonged to nuclear families followed by 30 per cent from joint families. Similar pattern was observed in both rural and urban area.

The data emphasized on the size of family revealed that most of the respondents unfold the trend of small sized family because more percentage (58%) of the respondents belonged to small sized (1-4 members) followed by 27 per cent respondents from medium sized families (5-6 members) and only 15 per cent belonged to large size families. The same type of representation was found in rural and urban area.

Perusal of results further show that maximum respondents (42%) had family income Rs. 1-10 lac/annum followed by 30 per cent families had income Rs. 50000-1 lac /annum.

Assessment of academic stress among respondents as per area:

As far as academic stress is concerned, results revealed that more percentage of respondents (51%) was in moderate level of academic stress followed by high level (27%) on total sample. Results highlighted that 12 per cent respondents of rural area had moderate level of academic stress against 14 per cent in urban area. Result also depict that a good percentage of respondents in urban area (6.5%) had high level of academic stress against 7 per cent respondents of rural area.

Levels of academic stress	Rural (n=50)	Urban (n=50)	Total
Low	12(6.0)	10(5.0)	22(22.0)
Moderate	24(12.0)	27(14.0)	51(51.0)
High	14(7.0)	13(6.5)	27(27.0)

Note: Figures in parentheses indicate percentage

Mean differences in academic stress among respondents:

To compare rural and urban respondents ‘z’ test was computed and mean scores and standard deviations were calculated. Results revealed significant differences in academic stress of rural and urban respondents

(z=1.96*).

Table 3 : Mean differences in academic stress among respondents of rural and urban area

Aspects	Academic stress Mean±SD	Z value
Area of residence		
Rural (n=50)	54.06±4.43	1.96*
Urban (n=50)	54.33±4.36	

Note: *indicates significance of value at P=0.05 level

Assessment of self-esteem among respondents as per area

As far as self-esteem is concerned, results revealed that more percentage of respondents (56%) was in positive level of self-esteem followed by balanced level (23%) on total sample. Results highlighted that 13.5 per cent respondents of rural area had positive level of self-esteem against 14.5 per cent in urban area.

Table 4 : Assessment of self-esteem among respondents of rural and urban area (n=100)

Self-esteem	Rural (n=50)	Urban (n=50)	Total
Positive	27(13.5)	29(14.5)	56(56.0)
Balanced	10 (5.0)	13(6.5)	23(23.0)
Negative	13(6.5)	8(4.0)	21(21.0)

Note: Figures in parentheses indicate percentage

Mean differences in self-esteem among respondents as per area:

To compare rural and urban respondents ‘z’ test was computed and mean scores and standard deviations were calculated. Results revealed significant differences in self-esteem of rural and urban respondents (z=1.98*).

Table 5 : Mean differences in self-esteem among respondents of rural and urban area

Aspects	Self-esteem Mean±SD	Z value
Area of residence		
Rural (n=50)	55.43±5.31	1.96*
Urban (n=50)	56.21±5.56	

Note: *indicates significance of value at P=0.05 level

Relationship of personal and socio-economic variables and self-esteem with academic stress:

Relationship of personal and socio-economic variables with academic stress:

The data related to the relationship of academic stress with aspects of personal and socio-economic

Table 6 : Relationship of personal and socio-economic variables with academic stress

Sr. No.	Personal and socio-economic variables	Academic stress	
		Rural (n=50)	Urban (n=50)
1.	Ordinal position	-0.12*	0.25
2.	Education of father	0.16*	0.20*
3.	Education of mother	0.15*	0.17*
4.	Occupation of father	0.31	0.42
5.	Occupation of mother	-0.11*	-0.12*
6.	Caste	0.42	0.36
7.	Size of family	0.43	0.41
8.	Annual income	0.2	-0.20*

Note: *indicates significance of value at P=0.05 level

variables of respondents are presented in Table 6 and the results highlighted a significant and positive correlation of academic stress with education of father ($r=0.16^*$), education of mother ($r=0.15^*$) and significant and negative correlation between ordinal position ($r=-0.12^*$) and occupation of mother ($r=-0.11^*$) in rural area. Whereas, in case of urban respondents significant and positive correlation was found between education of father ($r=0.20^*$), education of mother ($r=0.17^*$) and significant and negative correlation was found with occupation of mother ($r=-0.12^*$) and annual income ($r=-0.20^*$).

Relationship of self-esteem with academic stress:

Results presented in Table 7 depict the relationship of self-esteem of respondents with academic stress. Results presented in the table depict significant and negative correlation between self-esteem and academic stress *i.e.* ($r=-0.11^*$) in rural area and ($r=-0.14^*$) in urban area. Which shows that respondents who had high self-esteem will face less academic stress.

Table 7: Relationship of self-esteem with academic stress

Aspects	Academic stress	
	Rural (n=50)	Urban (n=50)
Self-esteem	-0.11*	-0.14*

Note: *indicates significance of value at P=0.05 level

Conclusion:

In personal and socio-economic variables half of the respondents (52%) were in 17-18 years of age followed by 16-17 years of age and have first ordinal position. Maximum number of respondent's mother and father educated up to secondary/higher secondary. Most of respondent's father work as farmer *i.e.* 43 per cent

and most of respondent's mother was home maker (76%). Maximum number of respondents was lives in nuclear family (70%) and have small size family with the annual income of 1-10 lac/annum. Further results illustrate that good percentage of respondents had moderate level (51%) of academic stress followed by high level (27%). Comparative distribution reflects that urban respondents faced high level of academic stress than rural respondents. Data regards to self-esteem found that maximum respondents have positive level of self-esteem followed by balanced level. Comparative results portray significant differences for both rural and urban area. Results revealed that ordinal position and occupation of mother was significantly and negatively correlated with academic stress in rural area and education of parents was significantly and positively correlated with academic stress in both rural and urban area which means that if the education of parents increases than academic stress also increases. The occupation of mother and annual of family was significantly and negatively correlated with academic stress which means that if the income increases in the family than the academic stress will be decreased. Further results depict that self-esteem of respondents was significantly and positively correlated with academic stress which means that if self-esteem of respondents increases than their academic stress will be decreased.

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