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A STUDY OF EXAMINATION-RELATED STRESS AMONG SCIENCE STREAM STUDENTS AT THE HIGHER SECONDARY LEVEL IN PUSAD TOWN.

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ABSTRACT

In today's competitive academic environment, higher secondary students, particularly those in the science stream, face significant mental pressure due to rigorous coursework, laboratory work, projects, and preparation for competitive entrance examinations. This pressure often results in examination-related stress, which manifests as anxiety, fear, restlessness, sleep disturbances, lack of self-confidence, and difficulty concentrating. The present study aims to examine the intensity, nature, causes, and effects of examination-related stress among 200 higher secondary science students selected from various schools using convenience and stratified random sampling techniques. Standardized tools, including the Stress Inventory and Examination Stress Scale, were employed to measure stress levels, and their reliability was confirmed using Cronbach's alpha and the Test-Retest method.

Descriptive statistical techniques, including Mean, Standard Deviation, Frequency, and Percentage, were used to analyze the collected data. The findings indicate that 25% of students experienced high stress, 50% moderate stress, and 25% low stress. Major contributing factors included the complexity of the curriculum, parental and teacher expectations, competitive exams, and distractions from technology and social media. Examination-related stress was found to negatively affect academic performance, mental health, social behavior, self-confidence, and concentration.

The study highlights the importance of implementing effective educational strategies to reduce stress, including active learning methods such as projects, experiments, and group discussions; teaching yoga, meditation, and breathing exercises; creating proper timetables balancing study and rest; positive reinforcement from teachers; and active parental support. These interventions can enhance students' mental stability, self-confidence, and academic performance, contributing to their overall development and psychological well-being.

This research provides valuable insights for educators, parents, and policymakers to develop effective stress management programs and foster a healthy learning environment, ensuring students' academic success and holistic growth.

KEYWORDS:Examination-related stress, Higher secondary students, Science stream, Academic performance, Mental health, Stress management, Educational strategies

BACKGROUND

In today's competitive era, higher secondary students, especially those in the science stream, are studying under intense mental pressure. The science stream, being more difficult, in-depth, and demanding compared to other streams, requires students to handle a heavier workload, including extensive studying, laboratory work, projects, as well as entrance examinations. To secure admission to engineering, medical, pharmacy, IT, or other professional courses after the 12th grade, students must clear highly competitive exams. All these expectations and responsibilities create examination-related stress among students. Examination-related stress is a form of mental pressure, manifesting in symptoms such as fear, anxiety, restlessness, sleep disturbances, lack of self-confidence, and difficulty concentrating. Along with the difficulty of the subjects, high expectations from parents, teachers, and society further increase stress among science students. Some students respond to stress by working harder and achieving better results, while others experience a decline in performance, which adversely affects both their mental health and academic progress. Moreover, the impact of stress is not limited to academics; it also affects students' physical health, social behavior, emotional balance, and long-term personality development. Recently, distractions from the internet, mobile phones, and social media have increased, further reducing concentration and raising levels of anxiety. Against this background, it becomes essential to study examination-related stress among higher secondary science students. Such a study allows for a detailed understanding of the causes and effects of stress, as well as possible measures to manage it. This can help provide students with mental stability, self-confidence, stress management techniques, and a healthy learning environment. In this way, the study serves as a guide for the overall development of students.

NEED FOR THE RESEARCH

Higher secondary students in the science stream face numerous educational challenges. The science stream is complex in terms of subject matter, requiring a deep understanding of subjects such as Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, and Biology. The complexity of these subjects, the pace of learning, laboratory work, projects, and preparation for competitive entrance exams increase mental stress among students. Increased examination-related stress not only affects academic performance but also has serious consequences on students' mental health, social behavior, self-confidence, and concentration. Some students perform well under stress, while others experience a decline in efficiency, creating obstacles in their learning. Hence, it is essential to study this problem. With the increasing use of technology, distractions and anxiety levels among students have risen due to mobile phones, the internet, and social media. High expectations from parents and teachers, the pressure of competitive exams, and the need to keep pace with academic demands further intensify stress. Against this background, it is important to conduct an in-depth study of the sources, symptoms, and effects of examination-related stress among science students. Research can provide valuable insights into measures to reduce stress, effective stress management strategies, ways to improve mental health, and the creation of a healthy educational environment for students. In this way, the study becomes essential for the overall development of students, improving the educational process, and supporting students' psychological well-being.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

Higher secondary students in the science stream are under the pressure of high academic expectations and competitive examinations. The in-depth and complex study required in subjects such as Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, and Biology creates significant mental stress for these students. Examination-related stress not only affects students' academic performance but also has serious consequences for their mental and physical health,

social behavior, self-confidence, and concentration. Under such circumstances, it becomes essential to conduct an in-depth study of this problem. Through research, it is possible to identify the factors that generate stress among students, its symptoms, and its effects. For example, some students perform more efficiently under stress, while others experience a decline in academic performance, leading to reduced self-confidence and negative impacts on mental health. Factors such as expectations from parents and teachers, the complexity of the curriculum, the pace of learning, competitive exams, and the increasing use of technology further intensify stress. Studying all these aspects can help establish effective strategies for stress management. Research also helps teachers and parents understand the nature and effects of student stress, enabling more effective student-centered teaching and guidance. Moreover, students can receive guidance on stress-control techniques, methods to maintain mental stability, strategies to improve concentration, and ways to sustain positive mental health. This study is extremely important for ensuring the overall development, academic progress, and mental well-being of higher secondary science students. The findings of the research can be useful for formulating educational policies, planning curricula, and developing stress management programs. This not only helps students achieve academic success but also supports their development as mentally resilient, confident, and creative individuals. Thus, studying examination-related stress among higher secondary science students not only addresses current problems but also makes a valuable contribution to future education, mental health, and the overall development of students.

OBJECTIVES

1) To identify the intensity, nature, and symptoms of examination-related stress among higher secondary science students and to study its prevalence.
2) To examine the factors causing stress in students, such as the complexity of the curriculum, competitive exams, expectations from parents and teachers, and social and technology-related reasons.
3) To study the impact of examination-related stress on students' academic performance, mental health, social behavior, and concentration.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For this study, the descriptive method has been used to conduct an in-depth analysis of the nature, causes, and effects of examination-related stress among higher secondary science students. The reason for using the descriptive method is to measure the intensity of stress in students, understand its symptoms, and analyze the resulting effects. A sample of 200 students has been selected for this study. These students are studying in the science stream at the higher secondary level and have been chosen from various schools. While selecting the sample, either Convenience Sampling or Stratified Random Sampling techniques were used. To measure examination-related stress among students, standardized tools such as the Stress Inventory or Examination Stress Scale were employed. These tools are already validated and widely used in educational and psychological research. They were also reviewed by experts for their appropriateness. Additionally, Cronbach's alpha or the Test-Retest Method was used to ensure the reliability of the tests. For data collection, students were approached in selected schools and asked to complete the questionnaire. The questionnaire covered various aspects of stress, including academic pressure, expectations from parents and teachers, examination-related anxiety, and physical symptoms.

Analysis and Interpretation

The collected data were analyzed using statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics such as Mean, Standard Deviation (SD), Frequency, and Percentage were used to understand the level and nature of stress among students. Additionally, coherent conclusions were drawn regarding the causes and effects of stress. In this way, through the descriptive research method, a comprehensive understanding of examination-related stress among higher secondary science students can be obtained, which can help in developing effective guidance for stress management.

Table No. 4.1

Table showing the description of examination-related stress among higher secondary science students

Stress Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
High	50	25
Moderate	100	50
Low	50	25
Total	200	100

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

Teachers should adopt active learning methods, such as projects, experiments, and group discussions. While preparing for exams, these methods help students develop independent thinking and understanding, which reduces stress. Schools should also teach yoga, meditation, and breathing exercises, helping students remain calm and prepare effectively for exams. Students should be guided to create a proper timetable, balancing study and rest, which reduces mental fatigue. Teachers should provide encouragement based on effort rather than giving negative feedback on mistakes during exams. This builds students' self-confidence and lowers stress. Using the stress level data obtained from the study, teachers and schools can offer support programs for students with high stress. Students with moderate or low stress can be guided to improve their study pace and quality. Parents should be encouraged to reduce excessive expectations and provide a positive environment. Their contribution is important in maintaining a balance between study and rest at home.

CONCLUSION

To reduce examination-related stress among students, educational strategies should include positive teacher-student interactions, proper timetabling, mental health practices, and active parental involvement. These measures improve academic performance, maintain mental well-being, and enhance the overall educational quality of students.

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