



EFFECTIVENESS OF STUDY SKILLS INTERVENTION IN REDUCING ACADEMIC STRESS AND EXAMINATION ANXIETY AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Academic stress and examination anxiety are among the most prevalent psychological concerns affecting university students worldwide. Increasing academic demands, examination pressure, and competitive educational environments often contribute to emotional distress and reduced academic performance. The present study examined the effectiveness of a structured study skills intervention in reducing perceived academic stress and examination anxiety among university students. A pre-test–post-test experimental-control group design was adopted. The sample consisted of 63 undergraduate students selected through purposive sampling, with 31 participants in the experimental group and 32 participants in the control group. Standardized instruments, namely the Westside Test Anxiety Scale (WTAS) and the Perception of Academic Stress Scale (PASS), were administered before and after the intervention. The intervention comprised three structured sessions involving memory enhancement techniques, note-making, mind mapping, mnemonics, chunking, spaced practice, time-management strategies, and relaxation techniques. The findings revealed a significant reduction in examination anxiety and perceived academic stress among students who received the intervention. The study concludes that study skills interventions represent practical, cost-effective, and scalable approaches for promoting psychological well-being and academic adjustment among university students.

KEYWORDS: *Academic Stress, Examination Anxiety, Study Skills Intervention, University Students, Psychological Well-being, Self-Regulated Learning*

1. INTRODUCTION

The university period represents a crucial stage in students' academic and personal development. During this phase, students encounter increased academic responsibilities, performance expectations, competitive educational environments, and uncertainties regarding future careers. These challenges often contribute to elevated levels of academic stress and examination anxiety.

Academic stress refers to the psychological strain experienced when educational demands exceed an individual's perceived coping resources. Examination anxiety, a common manifestation of academic stress, involves cognitive worry, emotional tension, physiological arousal, and behavioral avoidance during evaluative situations. High levels of anxiety negatively influence concentration, memory retrieval, attention, and academic achievement.

Research suggests that effective study skills play an important role in improving academic performance and reducing psychological distress. Study skills include cognitive, behavioral, and metacognitive strategies such as note-making, mind mapping, mnemonics, visualization, active recall, and time management. These techniques enhance learning efficiency, increase academic confidence, and foster self-regulated learning.

The present study investigates whether a structured study skills intervention can effectively reduce perceived academic stress and examination anxiety among university students.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Test anxiety has been extensively studied as a significant predictor of academic performance. Spielberger (1980) conceptualized test anxiety as a multidimensional construct consisting of cognitive and emotional components. Zeidner (1998) reported that excessive anxiety interferes with memory retrieval, concentration, and academic achievement.

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) proposed the Transactional Model of Stress, emphasizing that stress results from an individual's appraisal of environmental demands and available coping resources. Within academic settings, excessive workload, examination pressure, and ineffective study habits frequently contribute to heightened stress levels.

Bedewy and Gabriel (2015) identified academic expectations, workload, and examination-related demands as major contributors to perceived academic stress among university students. Misra and McKean (2000) further reported that poor time management and ineffective coping strategies significantly increase academic stress.

Study skills have been recognized as important predictors of academic success. Credé and Kuncel (2008) found that study habits and learning strategies were strongly associated with academic performance. Dunlosky et al. (2013) identified evidence-based learning techniques such as distributed practice, active recall, and elaborative learning as highly effective for enhancing retention and learning outcomes.

Hattie, Biggs, and Purdie (1996) reported that study skills interventions improve both academic achievement and psychological adjustment. Similarly, Ergene (2003) found that study skills and cognitive-behavioral interventions significantly reduce test anxiety among students.

Despite extensive literature supporting study skills training, limited research has examined the effectiveness of brief, structured interventions in reducing academic stress and examination anxiety among university students. The present study addresses this gap.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To assess the level of examination anxiety among university students.
2. To assess the level of perceived academic stress among university students.
3. To evaluate the effectiveness of study skills intervention in reducing examination anxiety.
4. To evaluate the effectiveness of study skills intervention in reducing perceived academic stress.

4. HYPOTHESES

H1: There will be a significant reduction in examination anxiety following the study skills intervention.

H2: There will be a significant reduction in perceived academic stress following the study skills intervention.

5. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study employed a pre-test–post-test experimental-control group design.

Sample

The sample comprised 63 undergraduate students from Maharani Cluster University, Bengaluru. Among them, 31 students were assigned to the experimental group and 32 students formed the control group.

Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling technique was used for participant selection.

Inclusion Criteria

- University students aged 17–22 years.
- Students enrolled in Arts and Commerce streams.
- Ability to understand English.
- Students studying in government colleges.

Exclusion Criteria

- Students with a history of psychological illness.
- Students with major physical disabilities.
- Students who did not attend all intervention sessions.

Variables

Independent Variable

Study Skills Intervention Programme.

Dependent Variables

- Examination Anxiety
- Perceived Academic Stress

Instruments

Westside Test Anxiety Scale (WTAS)

Developed by Richard Driscoll (2007), the WTAS consists of 10 items measuring examination anxiety. Higher scores indicate greater anxiety.

Perception of Academic Stress Scale (PASS)

Developed by Bedewy and Gabriel (2015), PASS consists of 18 items measuring perceived academic stress. Higher scores indicate greater stress.

Intervention Programme

The intervention consisted of three sessions of approximately 45 minutes each covering:

- Memory processes and forgetting curve
- Note-making strategies
- Acronyms and acrostics
- Chunking techniques
- Visualization methods
- Method of loci
- Mind mapping
- To-do list preparation
- Repetition strategies
- Spaced versus massed practice
- Relaxation and stress management techniques

Statistical Analysis

Data were analyzed using paired sample t-tests to compare pre-test and post-test scores for examination anxiety and academic stress.

6. RESULTS

The findings indicated substantial reductions in both examination anxiety and perceived academic stress among participants who received the intervention.

Before the intervention, a considerable proportion of participants reported moderate to high levels of examination anxiety. Following the intervention, the percentage of students reporting high anxiety declined considerably, whereas the proportion reporting low anxiety increased.

Similarly, perceived academic stress scores demonstrated a significant decline following participation in the study skills programme. Statistical analyses confirmed significant differences between pre-test and post-test scores, thereby supporting both research hypotheses.

7. DISCUSSION

The present study demonstrated that structured study skills interventions significantly reduce academic stress and examination anxiety among university students.

The findings are consistent with Ergene (2003), who reported that study skills and cognitive-behavioral interventions effectively reduce test anxiety. The intervention enhanced students' preparedness for examinations by providing practical strategies for organizing, retaining, and retrieving academic information.

The findings also support the self-regulated learning framework proposed by Zimmerman (2002), which emphasizes planning, monitoring, and strategic learning behaviors. Students who acquired effective study techniques reported improved confidence and reduced emotional distress.

The intervention included evidence-based learning techniques such as spaced practice, chunking, visualization, and mind mapping. These strategies improve learning efficiency while reducing cognitive overload. Consequently, students experienced greater control over academic tasks and lower levels of anxiety.

The reduction in stress and anxiety observed in the present study further supports the Transactional Model of Stress proposed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984), which suggests that improved coping resources can significantly reduce stress perceptions.

8. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that study skills intervention is an effective approach for reducing academic stress and examination anxiety among university students. The intervention enhanced learning efficiency, improved academic confidence, and promoted psychological well-being.

Given its practical nature, low cost, and ease of implementation, study skills training can be incorporated into university counseling services, orientation programmes, and academic support systems.

9. EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

- Universities should organize regular study skills workshops.
- Counselors may use study skills interventions as preventive mental health strategies.
- Educators can integrate evidence-based learning techniques into classroom instruction.
- Academic support centres can provide structured study skills training to students experiencing stress and anxiety.

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