

## ACADEMIC STRESS AND MENTAL HEALTH OF NINTH-STANDARD STUDENTS IN TIRUVANNAMALAI DISTRICT

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### ABSTRACT

*This study was conducted to explore academic stress and its relationship with the mental health of ninth-standard students. 300 ninth-standard students from Government schools, aided schools self-financed high schools and higher secondary schools in Thiruvannamalai district, Tamil Nadu were selected through simple random sampling and the data was collected with Educational Stress Scale for Adolescents and Positive Mental Health Scale. The results revealed that students from private schools experienced higher academic stress than that of government school students, and private school students have higher mental health status than their counterparts. It was also found that academic stress had a significant relationship with the mental health of high school students. The implications of this are presented in this article.*

**Keywords:** *Academic Stress, Mental Health and Ninth Standard Students.*

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### Introduction

Stress becomes an integral part of human life. Anything that creates a challenge or a threat to our comfort is a stress. All kind of stress is not considered to be bad because it helps people to perform well. In academics, stress is unavoidable among students, and it influences students' performance in all academic activities. Academic stress plays a major role in determining the mental health of students. According to the World Health Organization (2014), mental health is viewed as "a state of well-being in which individuals realize their potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and can make a contribution to community". Galderisi, et al (2015) defined "mental health as a dynamic state of internal equilibrium which enables individuals to use their abilities in harmony with universal values of society. Basic cognitive and social skills; ability to recognise, express and modulate one's own emotions, as well as empathize with others; flexibility and ability to cope with adverse life events and function in social roles; and harmonious relationship between body and mind represent important components of mental health which contribute, to varying degrees, to the state of internal equilibrium". Being in a transitional stage between childhood and adulthood, adolescents have to confront with varied types of stressors. Madlan (2004) indicated that "mental health is a way of thinking, feeling and behaviour in a person's daily lives. People with positive mental health can recognise themselves on their ability, be willing to accept failure, able to control their emotions and appreciate themselves". Many types of research were attempted to explore the relationship between academic stress, mental health and other correlates among students. Prabu (2015) reported that "higher secondary students experienced moderate level of academic stress, especially students in private schools experienced a high level of stress than the students in government schools".

### Need and Significance of the Study

High school is a crucial stage thereafter students have to choose different subjects in higher secondary, where their marks are the only consideration to allocate various streams of study; and hence they are under tremendous stress to secure marks in public examinations. In this context, it is imperative

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to explore the Indian constitution to ensure that school education is a fundamental right for every child. Failure and poor achievement among IX standard students are serious problems faced by educationists, teachers, parents and administrators in the present time even though IX standard students have high general mental ability. Whether these failures are due to a high level of anxiety these are due to lack of emotional and mental health or low general mental ability is to be seen. These are some of the questions, the answers to which may make this study meaningful.

Our education aims at the all-round development of the personality of the child. Education is meant to develop three domains i.e. cognitive, affective and conative. Our education mainly stresses developing a cognitive aspect that deals with knowledge and to some extent developing a cognitive aspect that deals with motor skills. The affective aspect which deals with the emotions, feelings and sentiments of the child is neglected by our Education. For developing the child emotionally and socially mature, only formal education is not enough but informal education which the child gets from his family and society is also needed. Although very few studies have been conducted, yet study on all the variables taken together on IX standard students have not been conducted so far in India as well as abroad. Therefore, there is an urgent need to explore this field further. In the modern age of competition, all parents are worried about their children's future. It is therefore important for the parents, teachers and administrators to know and understand their level of Academic Stress and mental health.

#### **Statement of the Problem**

Given the above facts, the investigator has tried to study the factors that influence the academic achievement of IX-standard students. Psychologically and emotionally balanced, intellectually sound and socially mature students would contribute more towards the actualisation of their abilities. Consequently, to make it more effective and productive, the present study has been stated as: "Academic Stress and Mental Health of Ninth Standard Students in Tiruvannamalai District".

#### **Academic Stress**

Academic stress is associated with a variety of negative health outcomes, including depression and physical illness. Academic stress, conceptualised as a disturbance induced by a student's appraisal of academic stressors, is common in children and often leads to psychological and bodily distress.

#### **Mental Health**

Mental health is defined as a state of well-being in which every individual realises his or her potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and can make a contribution to her or his community.

#### **Objectives of the Study**

- To find out the level of academic stress of IX standard students.
- To find out the level of mental health of IX standard students.
- To find out whether there is any significant difference in the academic stress and the mental health of IX standard students with respect to their gender.
- To find out whether there is any significant difference in the academic stress and the mental health of IX standard students with respect to their medium of instruction.
- To find out whether there is any significant difference in the academic stress and the mental health of IX standard students with respect to their parent's occupation.
- To find out whether there is any correlation between academic stress and mental health.

#### **Hypotheses of the Study**

- The level of academic stress and mental health of IX standard students is high.
- There is no significant difference in the mean score of academic stress and mental health of IX standard students with respect to gender.
- There is no significant difference in the mean score of academic stress and mental health of IX standard students with respect to the medium of instruction.
- There is no significant difference in the mean score of academic stress and mental health of IX standard students with respect to the parents' occupations.
- There is no significant correlation between academic stress and the mental health of IX standard students.

### Delimitations of the Study

- The study is limited to IX standard students in Thiruvannamalai district only.
- The main objective of the investigation is to study the relationship between academic stress and mental health
- Since the time available for the study was very short, a detailed study was not possible to conduct by considering other psychological factors.
- Both Tamil and English medium students are included.

### Limitations of the Study

The present study has the following limitations,

The investigator selected 300 high school students from ninth standard students in Thiruvannamalai District of Tamil Nadu, India. The investigator selected only nine higher secondary schools used for the present study.

### Method of the Study

Considering the objectives and hypothesis of the study, the investigator selected the descriptive survey method for the present study.

### Sample of the Study

The sample consisted of 300 high school (IX standard) students from standard in Thiruvannamalai District, Tamil Nadu, India.

### Statistical Technique Used in the Study

Percentage analysis, t-test, ANOVA, and correlation were used for analysing the collected data using the SPSS 27.0 version.

### Hypothesis Testing

#### Hypothesis 1

The academic stress and mental health levels of IX standard students is high.

**Table 1**

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Avg Score	Level of Significance
Academic Stress	300	48.4602	20.2904	80.00	The mean score is below average level
Mental Health	300	125.5703	21.6704	110.00	The mean score is above average level

From the above table, the calculated mean value of academic stress is 48.4602 is less than the average mean value of 80.00 and mental health 25.5703 is greater than the average mean value the 110.00.

Hence, it is found that the level of academic stress of IX standard students is low and the level of mental health of IX standard students is not low.

#### Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference in the mean score of academic stress and mental health of IX standard students with respect to gender.

This hypothesis is tested by using a t-test,

**Table 2**

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	S.D	t-Value	Significant Level
Academic Stress	Male	137	50.3102	21.4103	1.4500	Not Significant
	Female	163	46.9021	19.2304		
Mental Health	Male	137	121.7902	21.7903	2.8020	Significant
	Female	163	163.7502	21.1304		

The value (t) which is calculated in the above-mentioned table (1.4500) is less than the value 1.99 (table value) at a 5% significant level. It is not significant. Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted and it is concluded that there is no significant difference in the mean score of academic stress of IX standard students with respect to gender.

The value (t) which is calculated in the above-mentioned table (2.8020) is greater than the value of 1.99 (table value) at a 5% significant level. It is significant. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected and it is concluded that there is a significant difference in the mean score of mental health of IX standard students with respect to gender.

### Hypothesis 3

There is no significant difference in the academic stress and mental health of IX standard students with respect to the medium of instruction.

This hypothesis is tested by using a t-test,

**Table 3**

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	S.D	t-value	Significant Level
Academic Stress	Tamil	189	48.1601	19.9201	0.325	Not Significant
	English	111	48.9621	20.9901		
Mental Health	Tamil	189	121.6501	22.5501	4.205	Significant
	English	111	132.2501	18.3303		

The value (t) which is calculated in the above-mentioned table (0.325) is less than the value 1.99 (table value) at a 5% significant level. Hence, it is not significant. Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted and it is concluded that there is no significant difference in the mean score of academic stress of IX standard students with respect to the medium of instruction.

The value (t) which is calculated in the above-mentioned table (4.205) is greater than the value of 1.99 (table value) at a 5% significant level. Hence, it is significant. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected and it is concluded that there is a significant difference in the mean score of academic stress of IX standard students with respect to the medium of instruction.

### Hypothesis 4

There is no significant difference in the academic stress and mental health of IX standard students with respect to the parents' occupation.

This hypothesis is tested by using a F-test,

**Table 4**

Variable	Sum of Squares	Sum of Squares	df	Mean-Variance of Squares	F	Significant Level
Academic Stress	Between groups	2906.7210	4	726.6800	1.7840	NS
	Within groups	120191.7160	295	407.4300		
Mental Health	Between groups	1475.5070	4	368.8770	0.7830	NS
	Within groups	138956.0230	295	471.0370		

The value (F) which is calculated in the above-mentioned table (1.7840) is less than the value of 3.23 (table value) at 5% significant level. Hence, it is not significant. Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted and it is concluded that there is no significant difference in the mean score of academic stress of IX standard students with respect to parents' occupation.

The value (F) which is calculated in the above-mentioned table (0.7830) is less than the value of 3.23 (table value) at a 5% significant level. Hence, it is not significant. Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted and it is concluded that there is no significant difference in the mean score of mental health of IX standard students with respect to parents' occupation.

### Hypothesis 5

There is no significant correlation between the academic stress and mental health of IX standard students.

This hypothesis was tested using Karl Pearson's Product Moment Coefficient of Correlation.

**Table 5**

Correlations		
	Academic Stress	Mental Health
Academic Stress	1	0.183**
Mental Health	0.183**	1

The above table shows that there is a significant positive correlation between academic stress and the mental health of ninth-standard students. Hence the stated hypothesis is rejected. Since the sample correlation is positive, it indicates that if the academic stress is more the mental health is also more and versa.

#### **Findings of the Study**

- it is found that the level of academic stress of IX standard students is low and the level of mental health of IX standard students is high.
- It is found that there is no significant difference in the mean score of academic stress of IX standard students concerning gender.
- It is found that there is a significant difference in the mean score of mental health of IX standard students concerning gender.
- It is found that there is no significant difference in the mean score of academic stress of IX standard students concerning the medium of instruction.
- It is found that there is a significant difference in the mean score of mental health of IX standard students concerning the medium of instruction.
- It is found that there is no significant difference in the mean score of academic stress of IX standard students concerning parents' occupation.
- It is found that there is no significant difference in the mean score of mental health of IX standard students concerning parents' occupation.
- It is found that there is a significant positive correlation between academic stress and the mental health of ninth-standard students.

#### **Implication of the Study**

The findings of the study indicated the need for understanding the academic stress of ninth-standard students. Periodical training programmes could be organized for school students and parents to sensitize them about academic stress and ways to handle it in an efficient way. Teachers can provide interventions to reduce stress among students. Teachers can break the complex tasks into manageable segments which will be easy to do without stress. Relaxation techniques such as meditation and yoga can be provided to students to reduce stress and be mentally healthy.

#### **Conclusion**

The investigation of the present study concluded that there is an average level of academic stress and a high level of mental health found in ninth-standard students. The differential analysis revealed that there are some significant differences in mental health in the sample selected for the study. The correlation analysis also revealed that there is a significant positive correlation between academic stress and mental health. Hence, it is quite clear that mental health and academic stress should properly be improved in ninth-standard students to achieve more and more in academic achievement and life success.

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