

STRESS AND ITS MANAGEMENT AMONG SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Stress is a common issue among senior secondary school students, impacting their mental and emotional well-being. Effective stress management strategies are essential to help students cope with academic pressures, social challenges, and personal expectations. Implementing techniques such as time management, relaxation exercises, mindfulness, and seeking support from counsellors or peers can significantly aid in reducing stress levels. By addressing stress proactively and promoting healthy coping mechanisms, senior secondary school students can enhance their overall well-being and academic performance. Students in secondary and tertiary education settings face a wide range of ongoing stressors related to academic demands. Previous research indicates that academic-related stress can reduce academic achievement, decrease motivation, and increase the risk of school dropout. The longer-term impacts, which include reduced likelihood of sustainable employment, cost Governments billions of dollars each year.

Key Words: Stress management, mental stress, school students.

INTRODUCTION

Academic stress is the anxiety and stress that comes from schooling and education. There is a lot of pressure that comes along with pursuing their education. Students report experiencing academic stress at predictable times each semester with the greatest sources of academic stress resulting from taking and studying for exams, grade competition, and the large amount of content to master in a small amount of time (Abouserie, 1994).

There are lot of stress related to studies, homework, tests, reading, tuition, and other academic competitions student faces a lot of stress due to an imbalance of academic and social performance and time management for extracurricular activities from education. Academic stress is especially high in students who are unable to maintain a balance between their academic, family, and friend, social and academic activities in life. Stress is very common as they are more worried about their careers. Student stress level also depends a lot on the attitude of teachers towards them. Fear of academic failure related to these tasks is a definite stressor (Kolko, 1980).

School education is a very important part in an individual's life and is also a turning point in their academic life. At this stage, the academic performance of a student plays a crucial role in deciding the next stage of their education, which in turn shapes their career. An excess of academic stress during this stage can result in adverse effects that are far-reaching and prolonged. While academic knowledge is already decided by high institutions, organizations. Education is something that is decided by the seekers of knowledge themselves.

- *Over time selective high schools have oriented themselves to address a context of increasingly competitive college admissions*
- *School work, college applications, extracurricular activities, and parental expectations all contribute to teenagers' stress*
- *Youth, schools, and experts identified substance use as a common strategy for coping with stress*

FACTORS CAUSING STRESS AMONG SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

1. **Fear of failure:** The fear of failure is a pervasive and debilitating phenomenon among senior secondary school students. It can manifest as anxiety, self-doubt, and avoidance of challenges, ultimately hindering academic performance and personal growth. Students may fear failure due to high expectations from parents, teachers, or themselves, leading to a fixed mindset and risk aversion. This fear can also stem from past experiences of failure, perceived consequences of not meeting expectations, or societal pressure to succeed.
2. **Tougher academics and more responsibilities:** Senior secondary school students face increasingly tougher academics and more responsibilities, leading to heightened stress and pressure. The curriculum becomes more challenging, with complex subjects, heavier workloads, and higher stakes assessments.
3. **Social pressures:** Senior secondary school students face significant social pressures that can impact their mental health, relationships, and academic performance. Peer relationships become increasingly complex, with social hierarchies, cliques, and bullying creating a challenging environment. Students may feel

pressure to conform to certain groups or norms, leading to identity issues and self-doubt. Social media amplifies these pressures, with curated online personas creating unrealistic expectations and fuelling competition.

4. **Uncertainty about the future:** Senior secondary school students often experience uncertainty about their future, leading to anxiety, self-doubt, and indecision. As they approach the end of their secondary education, they face significant decisions about their post-secondary paths, including choosing courses, careers, and institutions. The pressure to make the "right" choice can be overwhelming, especially with the influence of parents, teachers, and societal expectations. Students may worry about their ability to succeed in their chosen field, fear making a mistake, or be uncertain about their interests and strengths.

CAUSES OF STRESS AMONG SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

Senior secondary school students experience stress due to various factors. Academic pressure is a significant contributor, as students face intense competition and high expectations from parents and teachers (Kumar et al., 2013). The burden of exams, homework, and grades can lead to anxiety and stress (Singh et al., 2013).

Social relationships also play a role, as students navigate peer pressure, friendships, and romantic relationships (Chowdhury et al., 2013). Additionally, family-related issues, such as parental conflict or financial problems, can affect students' mental well-being (Sharma et al., 2013).

Furthermore, students' own expectations and self-criticism can exacerbate stress levels (Gupta et al., 2013). The pressure to excel in extracurricular activities and sports can also contribute to stress (Rathore et al., 2013).

STRESS MANAGEMENT TOOLS AMONG SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

Senior secondary school students can benefit from various stress management tools to cope with academic and personal pressures. Research suggests that mindfulness practices, such as meditation and deep breathing, can reduce stress and improve emotional regulation.

Physical activity, including yoga and sports, can also alleviate stress and improve mood. Additionally, cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) and problem-focused coping strategies can help students manage stress and develop resilience.

OTHER EFFECTIVE TOOLS INCLUDE

Journaling and expressive writing: Journaling and expressive writing involve writing down thoughts, feelings, and experiences to process and release emotions, gain insight, and develop self-awareness. It helps to reduce stress and anxiety. Develop writing and communication skills by articulating thoughts and feelings. Foster creativity and self-expression by exploring imagination and ideas.

Social support networks, such as friends and family: Social support networks, comprising friends and family, play a vital role in the lives of senior secondary school students. These networks provide emotional support, practical help, guidance, and companionship, which are essential for students' mental health, well-being, and academic success. Friends and family offer a sense of belonging, trust, and reliability, allowing students to share their thoughts, feelings, and experiences without fear of judgment.

Time management and organizational skills: Effective time management and organizational skills are crucial for senior secondary school students to balance academic responsibilities, extracurricular activities, and personal life. By prioritizing tasks, setting realistic goals, and creating schedules, students can optimize their productivity and reduce stress. Organizational tools such as planners, calendars, and to-do lists help students stay on track, meet deadlines, and avoid procrastination. Additionally, skills like note-taking, summarizing, and categorizing information enable students to efficiently process and retain information.

Relaxation techniques, such as progressive muscle relaxation and visualization: Relaxation techniques, such as progressive muscle relaxation and visualization, are valuable tools for senior secondary school students to manage stress and anxiety. Progressive muscle relaxation involves systematically tensing and relaxing different muscle groups to release physical tension, while visualization involves using mental imagery to create a peaceful and calming state. These techniques help students calm their minds and bodies, reducing feelings of overwhelm and increasing focus. Regular practice can lead to improved sleep quality, enhanced concentration, and better emotional regulation.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, senior secondary school students face a multitude of stressors, including academic pressure, social expectations, and uncertainty about the future. If left unmanaged, stress can lead to negative consequences such as anxiety, depression, and decreased academic performance. However, by employing effective stress management techniques like relaxation methods, time management, social support networks, and reframing negative thoughts, students can mitigate the impact of stress and thrive in this critical phase of their lives. Educators, parents, and policymakers need to recognize the significance of stress management and

provide students with the necessary resources and support to develop healthy coping mechanisms, ensuring their well-being and success in both academics and beyond. By prioritizing stress management, we can empower senior secondary school students to navigate challenges with confidence and resilience, setting them up for a bright and successful future.

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