

# Exploring the Impact of Academic Stress on the Adjustment Patterns of Adolescent Students

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## Abstract:

It is believed that the youth class, particularly adolescents, have the greatest impact on society in this unending pursuit of progress, prosperity, and perfection. In this relentless pursuit of progress and prosperity, the young generation has to face the challenges of modern lightning technology, and if they fail to establish rapport with the fast pace of development, the risk of academic stress arises that is detrimental for their academic performance. Against this backdrop, adolescents from a variety of socio-cultural backgrounds are educated and trained to develop a health pattern adjustment to achieve the ultimate goal of a civilised society. Given this background, the current study tries to find out whether academic stress has any significant impact on adjustment patterns of adolescent students. The study was conducted on a sample of 200 adolescent students of Siwan district, Bihar, consisting of 100 male and the remaining half female adolescent students drawn from different public and private schools. For the assessment of the pattern of adjustment, the Mohsin-Shamshad Adaptation (Hindi) of the Bell Adjustment Inventory (1934) was applied. The level of academic stress was measured with the help of the Scale of Academic Stress (SAS) developed and standardised by Kim (1970) and adapted to Indian conditions by Rajendran & Kaliappan (1990) and Rao (2012). A significant difference was found in the level of stress between private and government school students. A significant relationship between patterns of adjustment and academic stress of adolescents has been found.

**Keywords:** Academic stress, Adjustment patterns, Adolescent students, Gender, School locality

## INTRODUCTION

The beginning of the 21st century is marked by an unprecedented pace of progress and prosperity in almost every domain of human endeavour. It is believed that the youth class, particularly adolescents, have the greatest impact on society in this unending pursuit of progress, prosperity, and perfection. In this relentless pursuit of progress and prosperity, the young generation has to face the challenges of modern lightning technology, and if they fail to establish rapport with the fast pace of development, the risk of academic stress arises that is detrimental for their academic performance. Against this backdrop, adolescents from a variety of socio-cultural backgrounds are educated and trained to develop a health pattern adjustment to achieve the ultimate goal of a civilised society. To promote well-being, resilience and development orientation, as well as to comprehend the structural barriers and social inequalities in opportunity, strong measures are required.

### Adolescence

Child development refers to the biological and psychological changes that occur in human beings between

birth and the end of adolescence, as the individual progresses from dependency to increasing autonomy. Because these developmental changes may be strongly influenced by genetic factors and events during prenatal life. It is widely believed that developmental change may occur as a result of genetically controlled processes known as maturation or as a result of environmental factors and learning but commonly involves an interaction between the two (Khan, I., 2013). The second decade of life, or “the teenage years”, adolescence is the distinct period of bio-developmental change in a person’s life that bridges childhood and adulthood. From a psychosocial vantage point, the developmental tasks of adolescence include taking responsibility for oneself and forming relationships with others. All these transitions mark adolescence as a period of both opportunity and risk. G. Stanley Hall’s monumental work on adolescence in 1904 set the tone of what was written in the subsequent half-century. Hall described it as a period of “storm and stress”. Contemporary thinking, however, places adolescence as a developmental period during which young people negotiate important life transitions (Ellis, 2004; Seginer & Somech, 2000). These life transitions are characterised by significant relationship challenges that indirectly and directly have an influence on the adolescents’ schooling, social relations, and psychological development. All these transitions mark adolescence as a period of both opportunities and vulnerabilities. Parents typically bear primary responsibility as caretakers of their children, but the whole society shares the obligations to help adolescents achieve their full potential in adulthood (Galvan, 2014; Spear, 2000).

### **Academic Stress**

Stress is ubiquitously seen in every walk of life, irrespective of age, gender or occupation. The escalating challenges posed by rapid development in modern digital technology further aggravated the intensity of stress. As far as academic stress is concerned, it is a psychological state of students which results from continuous social and self-imposed pressure in a social environment (Kaushik, N., 2024). It may be caused by many factors like poor time management, excessive assignments, poor social skills, peer competitions, etc. It has been estimated that many students experience academic-related stress that affects their academic performance (Brackney & Karabenick, 1955). Stress and such problems usually form a “positive feedback loop or vicious circle”, as they themselves act as significant sources of stress and sensitise the students to the other sources of stress by reducing his or her ability to cope (Kiselica et al., 1994)

### **Adjustment Patterns**

As far as adjustment is concerned, the concept of adjustment was coined by Darwin, who used it as an adaptation to survive in the physical world. Psychologists and scholars differ considerably in interpreting its meaning and nature, as can be seen from the following definitions: Human beings can adjust to the physical, social and psychological demands and challenges that arise from inter dependability with others. Adjustment is an organisational behaviour in life situations at home, school, and work, in growing up and in ageing. It is the course of behaviour an individual follows in relation to the demands of internal, external, and social environments. As individual adjustment is adequate, wholesome or healthful to the extent that he has established harmonious relationships between himself and the conditions, situations and persons who comprise his physical and social environment (Crow and Crow, 1956).

Educational adjustment is the ability of a person to respond to the educational environment. Poor school adjustment leads to low academic achievement, behavioural problems and even school dropout. Good adjustment helps him to overcome different difficulties. It helps to make good relationships with the society and with peer groups. It will make a good relationship with school and with himself or herself also. Adjustment is a continuous demand of change in the environment. It is inevitable with every situation or environment; adolescents have to adjust to make good social relationships to improve academic

achievement and to avoid emotional imbalance. The process of adjustment involves a person's attempt to cope with and transcend such challenges. This working definition provides a starting point. According to Aggarwal (2004), the adjustment of adolescents very much depends on the fulfilment of their significant specific needs that consist of physical needs, emotional needs, social needs, intellectual needs, moral needs and vocational needs. It may be helpful, therefore, to devote a little more space to two important qualities of adjustment. First, it is a process that involves continuous changes, and second, people develop a consistent pattern of adjustment to these constant changes. Students make many transitions during their years of schooling: from home to school, middle to high school, and high school to college or work. These transitions are usually major events in the lives of students and parents. The stresses created by these transitions can be minimised when the new environment is responsive to each particular age group.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

From the review of the literature available, it was noticed that a growing body of evidence has confirmed that adolescents not only experience the whole spectrum of mood disorders but also suffer from the significant morbidity and mortality associated with them. Stress is nowadays ubiquitously seen in students in general because of cutthroat competition to get admission or a job. This status of the knowledge gap justifies the present research work. Stress is the condition that results when person-environment interaction causes the individual to perceive a discrepancy, whether real or not, between the demands of a situation and the resources of the person's biological, psychological, or social systems. Stress associated with academic activities has been linked to various negative outcomes such as poor health (Greenberg, 1981; Lesko & Summerfield, 1989), depression (Aldwin & Greenberger, 1987), and therefore poor academic performance (Clark & Rieker, 1986; Linn & Zeppa, 1984). Lesko and Summerfield (1989) found a significant positive correlation between the incidence of illness and the number of exams and assignments.

**Hypotheses:** Review of the literature shed adequate light in framing the following hypotheses:

H<sub>1</sub>: There will be a significant difference in the academic stress of adolescents with respect to the type of schools.

H<sub>2</sub>: There will be a significant relationship between adjustment patterns and academic stress of adolescents.

## METHODOLOGY:

**a) SAMPLE:** The study will be conducted on a randomly drawn sample of 200 secondary school adolescent students from Siwan district, Bihar. Out of the total number of students selected for the study 100 will be male and the remaining 100 will be female adolescent students belonging to public and private schools in urban and rural localities of Siwan district.

**b) MEASURING INSTRUMENTS:** The following measuring tools and instruments were applied to obtain data:

**Mohsin-Shamshad Adaptation (Hindi) of Bell's Adjustment Inventory:** For measuring adjustment of the respondents, the Mohsin-Shamshad Adaptation (Hindi) of Bell's Adjustment Inventory (1934) was employed. The Mohsin-Shamshad adaptation of the Bell Adjustment Inventory consists of 135 items; however, this inventory was revised in 1988 in light of the doctoral research thesis of the late Khursheed Jahan of Patna University. In response to her suggestion, the number of items was reduced to 124 that tend to assess adjustment in four different areas: home, health, and social and emotional. The inventory yields a separate score as well as a composite score for overall adjustment. In the present (student-form), home

adjustment consists of 31 items, the health domain contains 29 items, and the social and emotional domain consists of 32 items, respectively. The responses are based on two points of scaling, i.e., ‘Yes’ and ‘No’. For every ‘Yes’ response, the participant gets ‘1’ mark and ‘0’ for the negative response. A high score on the inventory signifies poor adjustment, and a low score signifies poor adjustment in different specific areas and also in respect of the adjustment taken as a whole. The test was found highly reliable, which was 0.92. Home, health, social, and emotional adjustment.

**Scale of Academic Stress (SAS):** For measuring the academic stress of students, a 40-item composite scale was used. The scale was originally developed and standardised by Kim (1970). The scale was adopted to Indian conditions by Rajendran & Kaliappan (1990) and Rao (2012). The scale includes five components, i.e., personal inadequacy, fear of failure, interpersonal difficulties with teachers, teacher-pupil relationship/teaching methods, and inadequate study facilities. It is a five-point Likert-type scale in which options range from ‘No Stress’ to ‘Extreme Stress’. The weight of each response carries a score of ‘0’, ‘1’, ‘2’, ‘3’, and ‘4’, respectively. Each factor has an equal number of items. The higher the value of the score, the more academic stress and vice versa. It was determined to have a reliability of 0.82 drawn by the test-retest method.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

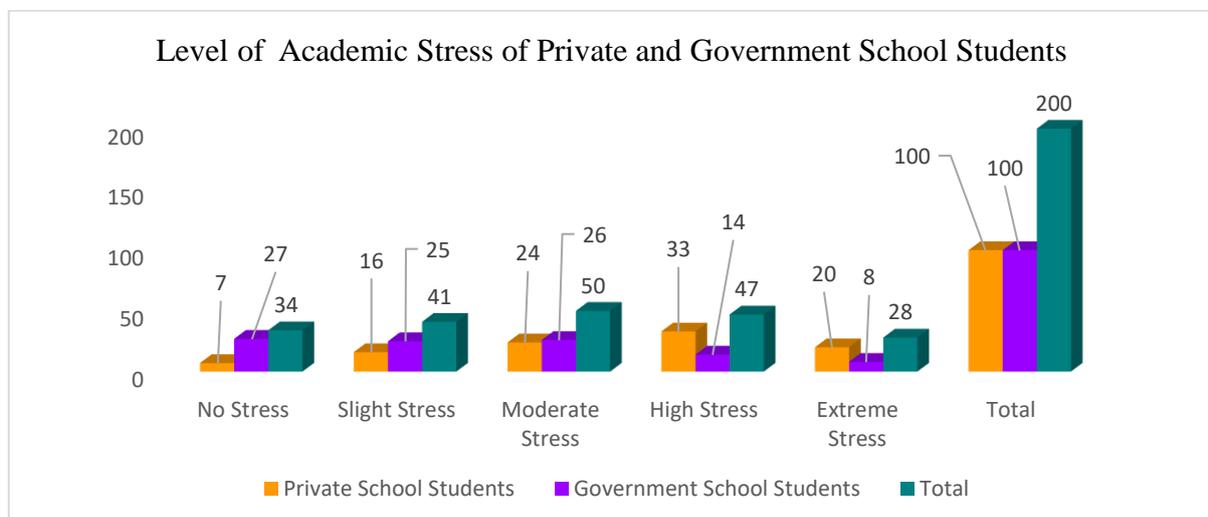
**Table 1**

**Mean, SD and t-test regarding Level of Academic Stress of Private and Government Students**

Significant at 0.01\*

Types of School	N	Mean	S.D.	SE <sub>D</sub>	df	t-test	Significance Level
Private School	100	119.25	49.72	6.98	198	5.90*	p < 0.01
Government School	100	78.07	48.99				

From the analysis of the data mentioned in Table 1, it is evident that there is a significant difference between private and government school students in the level of stress. The finding is in consonance with the earlier studies conducted in this area.

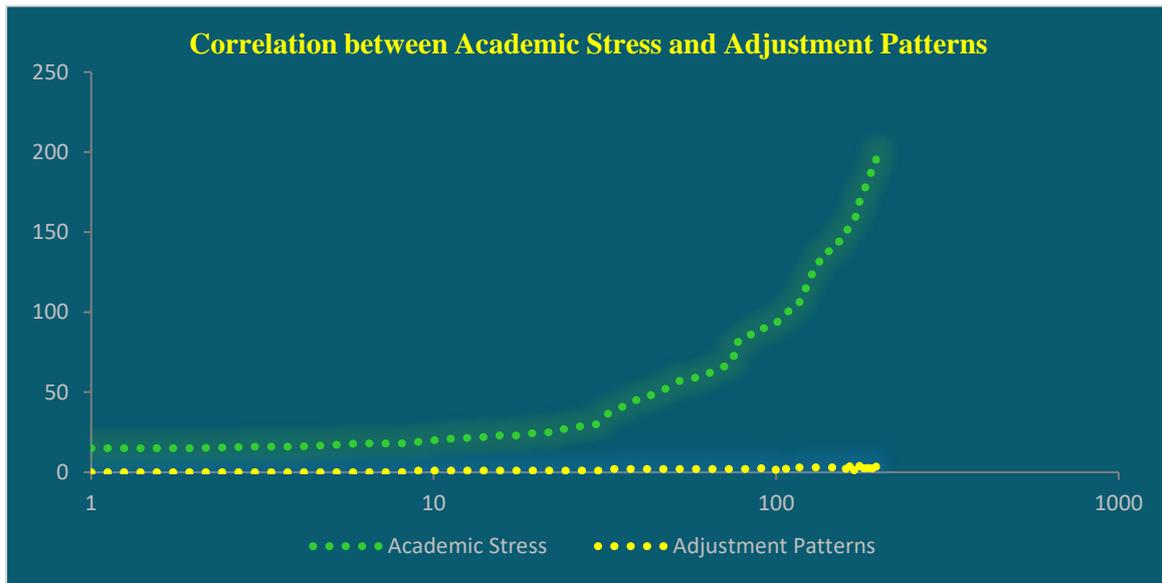


**Figure 1**

**Table 2 Correlational analysis of Academic Stress and Adjustment Patterns**

Variables	Coefficient of Correlation	df	Significance level
Academic Stress	0.651	198	p < 0.01
Adjustment Patterns			

**Figure 2**



Observation of the data as mentioned in Table 2 after statistical treatment revealed a moderate positive correlation between academic stress and adjustment patterns adopted by adolescents in response to escalating levels of academic stress. Respondents by and large showed their resilience skills to counter increasing levels of academic stress. The Pearson correlation coefficient for this pair of variables (academic stress and adjustment patterns) was found to be 0.65. This value indicates a moderate positive relationship between the variables. Figure 2 shows a curved relationship between the variables even though the relationship between the variables is moderately strong. Thus, it could be inferred that the relationship is neither linear nor monotonic.

### CONCLUSION

The present study enabled us to gather some facts regarding the components of academic stress among the adolescent students of private and government schools of Siwan district, Bihar. The study also helped us to know that academic stress is differentially related to adjustment patterns in terms of private and government school students. In many cases it may hamper the level of performance depending upon the level of stress. In a nutshell, it could be concluded that academic stress detrimentally impacted the academic performance of those students who could not evolve convenient adjustment patterns.

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