



## Stress and Secondary School Students

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### Abstract:

*The present study was aimed at exploring the nature and intensity of stress encountered by adolescent students of standard X. This research investigation delved into academic self-concept, self-efficacy and socio economic status held by the students of standard X. The main objective being to establish the beneficial role of these powerful self-constructs in alleviating stress. Most importantly, this study is expected to help students themselves to come to terms with the individual worth of a positive academic self-concept and high self-efficacy. It would lead them to believe that they are persons of value and worth, hence deserving high self-regard and possessing a healthy measure of built in self-esteem. It would teach them not to hide behind a mask of self-doubt or insecurity but instead, learn to take criticism in their stride, not get overwhelmed by feelings and never over react to stressful situations.*

**Keywords:** *Academic self-concept, Self efficacy, Socio-Economic status, Stress*

### 1. Introduction

Adolescents in schools are particularly prone to stress than young adults and older groups because of the corresponding age and transition related changes in their life. Stress among the youth could be due to a number of reasons such as home environment, pressure to perform well academically and a number a number of intra and inter-personal factors operating either together or in isolation. Among the home related factors, one of the significant reasons for stress among adolescents could be a communication gap between parents and children stemming from a lack of understanding between them. It may also be due to high expectations from parents on the one hand and students' inability to fulfill them on the order.

Age and transition related changes, home environment, intra and inter-personal factors and academic achievement are the different sources of stress in adolescents. The present research attempted to study the intra and inter-personal factors contributing to stress in students. Some of the intra and inter-personal sources of stress in adolescents are like change in social activities, fights with peers, new friends, trouble with parents, working with people one does not know, change in eating/sleeping habits, new responsibilities, financial difficulties, change of school, decline in health, academic self-concept, self-efficacy, locus of control, death/separation of loved one etc.

In India, stress in students could particularly be due to the shortcomings inherent in the educational system. Performances in academic examinations have become the indices of one's economic and social capabilities in adult life. As the S.S.C examination constitutes the first of the public external examinations in the country, the significant role it plays in the lives of countless young people can neither be overestimated nor denied. Since it is encountered by students during the psychologically disturbing and difficult years of their adolescence, it is consequently a major mental and emotional experience for most of them. Simultaneously, there are other factors like the large number of students that must be

examined and assesses each time, the artificial and unnatural situation in which the examination is conducted and the undue stress on learning by rote to secure high percentages that the examination demands (Charles, 1989).

Besides, most of the class X students apart from their school, attend coaching classes preparing them for entry into various professional courses in several institutions. They thus experience additional strain and stress- physical and mental. Parents and teachers perceive the family and school reputation at stake in the examination performance of their wards and turn the pressure further of them. Adolescents are particularly vulnerable to suicide on account of emotional immaturity and temperamental instability. Students attempt suicide due to worthlessness and to escape social disapproval often ignoring the consequences of such acts for themselves or their families.

The present study was thus aimed at exploring the nature and intensity of stress encountered by adolescent students of standard X. This research investigation delved into academic self-concept, self-efficacy and socio economic status held by the students of standard X. The main objective being to establish the beneficial role of these powerful self-constructs in alleviating stress. This positive outcome was envisioned on the reasoning that students having a positive self-concept of their abilities would be successful in their educational endeavors in the light of realistic levels of aspirations, high academic interest and feelings of satisfaction with academic experiences and thus be expected to manifest low levels of stress. The reverse holds true in children possessing a negative perception of their abilities as a poor self-concept could result in low self-confidence creating self-defeating attitudes, social problems or high risk behaviours, poor academic achievement and therefore higher levels of stress. This suggests the possibility of a negative relationship between stress and academic self-concept.

The higher the sense of self-efficacy, the greater the effort, persistence and resilience. A strong sense of efficacy enhances human accomplishment and personal well-being in many ways. People with high assurance in their capabilities approach difficult tasks as challenges to be mastered rather than as threats to be avoided. They set for themselves challenging goals and maintain strong commitment to them. They heighten and sustain their efforts in the face of failure. They quickly recover their sense of efficacy after failures or setbacks. They attribute failure to insufficient effort or deficient knowledge and skills which are acquirable. Such an efficacious outlook is expected to produce personal accomplishments, reduces stress and lowers vulnerability to depression. This suggests the inverse relationship between stress and self-efficacy.

The socio-economic background of students is known to be related to their experience of stress and academic self-concept. Those from better placed families are more socialized, self-efficacious and have a positive academic self-concept. The lower placed have fewer facilities and opportunities, always doubt their competence and show low academic self-concept. This suggests the possibility of a negative relationship between socio-economic status and stress.

Alleviating stress in students of standard X is a pressing need. It was with this objective in mind that the present study was structured to look into stress in students of standard X in relation to some specific intra-personal correlates as academic self-concept, self-efficacy and socio-economic status.

## **2. Significance of the study**

The identification of the nature and extent of stress in standard X students of the S.S.C. Board of Education would be helpful to policy planners as they could use the results of this study to revamp the educational system and successfully restructure Board examinations which are the very cause of vicious

tensions in these students. Further, knowledge of the factors resulting in examination distress would also enable parents and teachers to become better aware of their primary responsibility to avoid subjecting these students to undue academic stress and achievement pressure. Once stress and its correlates in the students of standard X are underlined, psychiatrists and self-help organizations could better equip themselves to take up stress management among the school going children in an attempt to ease or release stress and suggest constructive stress coping strategies.

School-based counseling services could be better organized so as to equip teachers with adequate knowledge and skills in an attempt to enable them to tackle the stress faced by youth effectively. Researchers and school practitioners would be motivated to look into students' self-beliefs about their academic capabilities, considering the fact that they are important components of motivation, self-regulation and academic achievement. This in turn would make a powerful contribution to educational practice, policy and theory.

The present study also presents implications for those working in educational institutions. It is often a goal of educators to help reduce students' stress and its negative effects on their lives.

Most importantly, this study is expected to help students themselves to come to terms with the individual worth of a positive academic self-concept and high self-efficacy. It would lead them to believe that they are persons of value and worth, hence deserving high self-regard and possessing a healthy measure of built in self-esteem. It would teach them not to hide behind a mask of self-doubt or insecurity but instead, learn to take criticism in their stride, not get overwhelmed by feelings and never over react to stressful situations.

### 3. Statement of the problem

*A study of stress in students of standard X in relation to their academic self-concept, self-efficacy and socio-economic status*

### 4. Operational definition of the terms

The following terms are defined to clarify their use in the context of this study:

1. **Stress:** Stress is defined as a reaction to any event in which environmental demands, internal demands, or both, tax or exceed the adaptive resources of a student.
2. **Academic self-concept:** Academic self-concept has been defined as the relatively stable idea possessed by a student based on a combination of judgments by self and significant others (parents, teachers and peers), concerning his/her behavior, strengths and weaknesses in the academic domain.
3. **Self-efficacy:** Self-efficacy refers to a student's convictions and confidence about his/her abilities to mobilize the motivation, cognitive resources and courses of action needed to excel in his/her studies and thereby achieve success at the Board Examination.
4. **Socio-economic status:** Socio-economic status refers to the extent of wealth, prestige and power enjoyed by a student and his/her family.

### 5. Objectives of the study

- To ascertain the relationship of total stress in students with their;
  - (a) Academic self-concept
  - (b) Self-efficacy
  - (c) Socio-economic status
 in case of boys, girls and total number of students.

- To ascertain the relationship of total stress in students with their
  - (a) Academic self-concept
  - (b) Self-efficacy
  - (c) Socio-economic statusin case of urban school students and rural school students.

## 6. Hypotheses of the study

**Ho<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant relationship of total stress in students with their;

- (a) Self-concept
- (b) Self-efficacy
- (c) Socio-economic status

in case of boys, girls and total number of students.

**Ho<sub>2</sub>:** There is no significant relationship of total stress in students with their;

- (a) Academic self-concept
- (b) Self-efficacy
- (c) Socio-economic status

in case of urban school students and rural school students.

## 7. Delimitations of the study

1. This research was confined only to the students of standard X studying during year 2014-15.
2. This investigation studied stress in students of standard X only in relation to academic self-concept, self-efficacy and socio-economic status.
3. The research attempted to study only the stress in students of standard X but not their coping strategies.
4. The sample comprised of only students of standard X of the S.S.C Gujarat Board of Education and not those of the C.B.S.E and I.C.S.E board of studies.
5. The study was delimited only to schools situated in Anand district.
6. The sample was selected from Gujarati medium schools of urban area and rural area of Anand district.
7. Minor variables included for purpose of study were only gender and area of school.
8. Only primary data were collected for purpose of this research.
9. The study was based on the quantitative paradigm and not the qualitative paradigm of research.

## 8. Variables of the study

These were as follows:

### 8.1 Dependent variable

- Stress

### 8.2 Independent variables

- Academic self-concept
- Self-efficacy
- Socio-economic status

### 8.3 Minor variables

- Gender
- Area of school

#### 8.4 Controlled variable

- Standard X

### 9. Research Methodology

The present investigation aims to study stress in students of standard X in relation to their academic self-concept, self-efficacy and socio-economic status. It is a descriptive research of the quantitative type.

### 10. Population & Sample

For the purpose of the present study, the population includes adolescent students of year 2014-15 of class X of all secondary schools of Anand district affiliated to the Gujarat Secondary Education Board of studies and whose medium of instruction is Gujarati.

A stratified random sampling technique was employed for the purpose of the study. Total 393 students were selected as a sample. Out of which 206 were boys and 188 were girls.

### 11. Tools of the study

Following standardized tools were used for the purpose of the study.

- (a) Stress scale (Trivedi, 2014)
- (b) Academic Self-concept scale (Trivedi, 2014)
- (c) Self-efficacy scale (Trivedi, 2014)
- (d) Socio-economic status Scale (Likhia, 2012)

### 12. Statistical techniques

The techniques used for analyzing the data in the present study have been classified into two broad categories:

#### 12.1 Descriptive analysis of data

1. Measures of central tendency which include the mean, median and mode.
2. Measures of variability which include the standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis.
3. Estimation of population parameters of mean and standard deviation.

#### 12.2 Inferential analysis of data

The study involves the following statistical techniques for testing of the null hypotheses:

4. Coefficient of correlation
5. Multiple correlations.

### 13. Analysis and interpretation of the data:

#### 13.1 Descriptive analysis of the data

Table 1 shows the measures of central tendency namely, mean, median and mode and measures of variability namely, SD, skewness and kurtosis and magnitude of the variables of the study for the total number of students 393.

**Table 1 Descriptive statistics and magnitude of the variables of the study**

Variable	Mean	Median	Mode	SD	SK	KU	Magnitude
Stress	134.97	135	138	10.75	-0.409	1.153	Moderate
Academic self-concept	120.43	115	104.14	20.21	0.086	0.087	Moderate
Self-efficacy	155.90	156	151	13.55	-0.226	0.105	Moderate
Socio-economic status	81.35	81	82	19.12	1.32	7.46	Low

From Table 1 it shows that the value of mean, median and mode are in ascending order for total number of students for stress and self-efficacy scores while for academic self- concept and socio-economic status its value are in descending order. The distributions of scores for total number of students are slightly negatively skewed for stress and self-efficacy and positively skewed for academic self-concept and socio-economic status. The value of kurtosis for stress and socio-economic status score are 1.153 and 7.46 respectively which are more than 0.263 and hence the distribution of scores for total number of students are platykurtic while for academic self-concept and self-efficacy's scores distribution value of kurtosis are 0.087 and 0.105 respectively which are less than 0.263 and hence the distribution of scores for total number of students are leptokurtic.

The magnitude of stress, academic self-concept and self-efficacy are moderate whereas for socio-economic status it is low.

### 13.2 Inferential analysis of the data

#### Correlation between stress and academic self-concept (ASC), self-efficacy (SE) and socio-economic status (SES)

**Testing hypothesis 1:** There is no significant relationship of total stress(TS) in students with their academic self-concept(ASC), self-efficacy(SE) and socio-economic status(SES) in case of boys, girls and total number of students. Table 2 shows the significance of 'r' between stress and ASC, SE and SES.

**Table 2 significance of 'r' between stress and ASC, SE and SES**

Variable	Group	N	Df	R	L.O.S.
ASC	Boys	205	203	-0.4836	0.01
	Girls	188	186	-0.4954	0.01
	TNS	393	391	-0.4638	0.01
SE	Boys	205	203	-0.5432	0.01
	Girls	188	186	-0.5971	0.01
	TNS	393	391	-0.5630	0.01
SES	Boys	205	203	-0.3171	0.01
	Girls	188	186	-0.3349	0.01
	TNS	393	391	-0.3115	0.01

From Table-2 it shows that the r's between stress and ASC of boys. Girls and TNS are -0.48, -0.50 and -0.46 respectively, which are negative, moderate in magnitude and significant at 0.01 level. Thus the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that higher the academic self-concept of students, lower is likely to be the total stress perceived by them.

From Table-2 it shows that the r's between stress and SE of boys. Girls and TNS are -0.54, -0.60 and -0.56 respectively, which are negative, moderate in magnitude and significant at 0.01 level. Thus the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that higher the self-efficacy of students, lower is likely to be the total stress perceived by them.

From Table-2 it shows that the r's between stress and SES of boys. Girls and TNS are -0.32, -0.33 and -0.31 respectively, which are negative, low in magnitude and significant at 0.01 level. Thus the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that higher the socio-economic status of students, lower is likely to be the total stress perceived by them.

**Testing hypothesis 2:** There is no significant relationship of total stress (TS) in students with their academic self-concept(ASC), self-efficacy(SE) and socio-economic status(SES) in case of urban school students and rural school students. Table 3 shows the significance of 'r' between stress and ASC, SE and SES.

**Table 3 significance of 'r' between stress and ASC, SE and SES**

Variable	Group	N	Df	r	L.O.S
ASC	Urban	185	183	-0.4731	0.01
	Rural	208	206	-0.4554	0.01
SE	Urban	185	183	-0.5645	0.01
	Rural	208	206	-0.5390	0.01
SES	Urban	185	183	-0.3275	0.01
	Rural	208	206	-0.3015	0.01

From Table-3 it shows that the r's between stress and ASC of urban school students and rural school students are -0.47 and -0.46 respectively, which are negative, moderate in magnitude and significant at 0.01 level. Thus the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that higher the academic self-concept of students, lower is likely to be the total stress perceived by them.

From Table-3 it shows that the r's between stress and SE of urban school students and rural school students are -0.56 and -0.54 respectively, which are negative, moderate in magnitude and significant at 0.01 level. Thus the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that higher the self-efficacy of students, lower is likely to be the total stress perceived by them.

From Table-2 it shows that the r's between stress and SES of urban school students and rural school students are -0.33 and -0.30 respectively, which are negative, low in magnitude and significant at 0.01 level. Thus the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that higher the socio-economic status of students, lower is likely to be the total stress perceived by them.

#### 14. Conclusion

In conclusion it can be said, that the perception of stress lays in the eyes of the beholder, much like the redness of the apple, the blueness of the sky or the greenness of the grass. Some of the finest lessons of life lie hidden in the beautiful works of creation itself. It would be well its worth for us to stop looking up to power-hungry and over achieving humans as our role models, and instead start to emulate the noble qualities of other forms of life on this planet.

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