

A STUDY OF STRESS AND ANXIETY RELATED TO EXAMINATIONS AND CHOICE OF STREAM AMONG ADOLESCENTS

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ABSTRACT

The period of transition between childhood and adulthood in humans is defined as adolescence. The onset of puberty marks the beginning of adolescence and is characterized by ever so many changes in the individuals. The large scale variations in the hormonal levels contribute to the period of stress and strife during adolescence. This most challenging phase of an individual's life also requires that extraordinary performance be shown in academics as it has a decisive role to play in the choice of stream and prospects leading to higher levels of stress and anxiety among the adolescents. Examination anxiety is one of the problems in school students especially the teenagers. This problem has resulted in behavioral issues amongst the adolescents. The present study was conducted to ascertain the reasons behind anxiety and stress during examinations and the choice of stream. The study revealed that the very term examination itself create Anxiety among the adolescents. The results showed that a significant role can be played by the school administrators, teachers and counselors in alleviating the levels of stress and anxiety among the adolescents. A healthy relationship between school and home can also play an important role in lowering levels of stress and anxiety.

Index Terms: Anxiety, Examinations, Stress, Curriculum, Parental pressure.

I. INTRODUCTION

The phase of adolescence marking a transition in the student's life from middle to secondary and to senior secondary school opens a plethora of stressful situations more so in the academic front. Examination, being the major one, where the adolescent predominantly feels a sense of pressure, others being unhealthy competition, indecisiveness in stream selection and the like. The academic pressure mounts as one needs to satisfy the expectations of the parents, teachers and society as well as keep abreast with the competition to set oneself apart from the fellow students. All this leads to anxiety and stress that manifests itself in the behavioral changes exhibited by the adolescents. The physical changes happening simultaneously at this stage add to the woes of the students confusing them further. The anxiety and stress of the higher achievers are much more than the less successful peers and as such, weighs heavily upon them. Coping up with the extreme pressure of this stage of adolescence is easy for some but most others struggle to grapple with the tough situation they are in.

Examination is one phase in the life of an adolescent that creates a lot of fear and related stress and anxiety. "Examination is a process of analysis, recognition and evaluation, understanding in and towards any type of academic evaluation conducted to measure and assess the students' academic performance". (Goodstein and Lanyon, 1975) Examination is an important part of the Indian Education system and almost each and every academic decision with a futuristic goal is based and assessed through examinations. Hence examinations play an important and vital role. At the same time with increase in competition and priorities, with their leanings predominantly on the child's score in the examinations rather than the abilities or skills worsens the scenario. Examinations have remained an integral part of the educational system from ancient times. It can safely be said that the educational system devoid of examinations is like an earthen pot without water in it.

Examinations are always associated with large amounts of stress that they bring along and have a huge impact on the psyche of the children facing them, with the changes of puberty multiplying their difficulties. It is a situation of 'perform or perish' which also sets the parents into action trying to bring the best out of their wards adding to a piquant situation and increasing the anxiety.

Anxiety is a common trait observed among the adolescents. According to Sarason (1998), "Anxiety is a basic human emotion consisting of fear and uncertainty that typically appears when an individual perceives an event as being a threat to the ego or self-esteem". Various studies on anxiety have shown a high level of examination anxiety among students leading to poor and low academic achievement (Sweetman, 2002; Austim, Patridge, Bitner and Wadlington, 1995; Cassady, 2001). Examination anxiety is a major factor contributing to a wide range of outcomes like psychological distress, academic under-achievement, academic failure and insecurity. (Hembree, 1988).

II. RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

Achieving one's educational and professional goals generally depends on academic performance. Therefore, it is not surprising that most of the students experience anxiety both before and during examinations. As a consequence of their emotional reactions during tests, the level of achievement of many students is found substantially lower than that would be expected on the basis of their intellectual aptitude in the early and recent researches. Academic Stress - attending school is the positive experience for many, yet many students also experience school as chronically stressful due to academic requirements i.e., tests, papers, presentations (*Murphy & Archer, 1996*). Childhood stress is increasing in both its frequency and severity. Some factors that may contribute to this stress include: the pressure on children to mature emotionally and psychologically at increasingly earlier ages, a decrease in the number of caring parents and subsequent reduction in parent's love and support. As a child grows and reaches puberty a psychological metamorphosis takes place and this is adolescence stage. It is developmental period during which a growing person makes a transition from childhood to adulthood. Irvine (2002) also identifies a range of stressors in children from parental divorce and separation, to academic and social failure. Throughout the adolescent years, stressful experiences are also considered to be increasing in intensity, as prominent stressors involving family dysfunction, peer demands and academic concerns are faced by adolescents (*Frydenberg, 1991b*).

Adolescence period can be considered as confusing times. In this period the individuals are no longer viewed as children but, nonetheless, are considered to be too immature to be treated as adults. The reversal from childhood to adolescence and from adolescence to adulthood have both been considered developmental transition's individual tends to become more vulnerable during periods of biological, social and psychological transitions.

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 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. Similarly, *Aldwin and Greenberger (1987)* observed that perceived academic stress was related to anxiety and depression in school students.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To compare the stress and anxiety of students of class X and XII
2. To find out the examination stress and anxiety levels in relation to different subjects of study.
3. To identify the role played by the school administration, teachers, parents, counsellors in reducing stress levels.

IV. METHODOLOGY

The present study is an exploratory study. The main purpose of this study is to find out the impact of examination of the minds of the adolescent further affecting their social and emotional development. Survey method was used. Self-constructed questionnaires divided on the basis of the Cognitive Behavior Treatment i.e. Psychological, Intellectual and Behavioural aspects were used as a qualitative measure to study the topic and draw conclusions.

V. SAMPLE OF THE STUDY

Random sampling method was used to select the sample.

The sample for the questionnaire in the present study comprised of 60 students, Mahamaya Balika Intercollege, for first part of the questionnaire 30 students from class 10th were considered and for the other part 30 students from class 12th, Mahamaya Balika Intercollege.

First a total of 60 students were selected from the various classes, Mahamaya Balika Intercollege, Noida to get information of the present study through questionnaire. They filled the questionnaires which enabled the investigator to study the topic and the streams they chose during their sessions played an important role in interpreting the anxiety level associated.

VI. TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES USED

A research is the detailed plan of the investigation. The data for the study was collected by means of self-constructed questionnaire.

Self Constructed Questionnaire - A self constructed questionnaire was directed to study the impact of examination on the minds of the students. The questionnaire was of two parts, the first part of 30 questions were directed to the students of

class 10th and the other 30 to the students of class 12th aimed at eliciting responses of adolescents expressing the situations they are in and go through before, during and after the examinations. The questions in the questionnaire were also planned based upon the knowledge of the investigators on the different phases that children go through while writing an examination.

Scoring and interpretation of score

The questionnaire collected the responses on a five point scale. Every statement either positive or negative yields elicits a response.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

VII. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

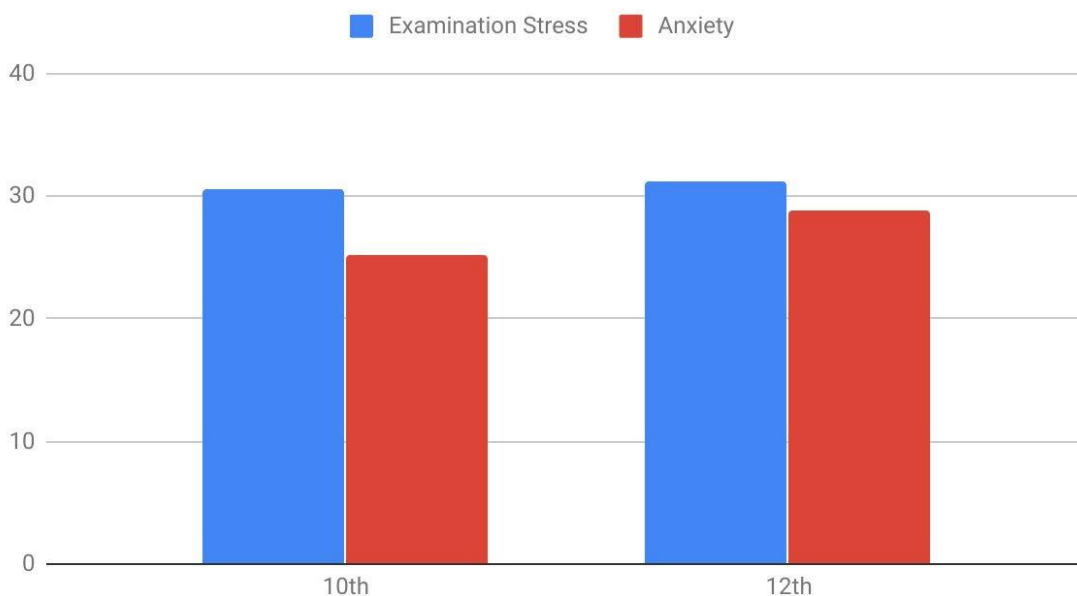
After administering the structured questionnaire to the sample the following could be deduced. The level anxiety towards examinations when studied with respect to the different subjects of study it could be seen that those pursuing Arts courses suffer from higher levels of stress and anxiety.

	Examination Stress		Anxiety	
	N	Mean	N	Mean
Science	30	30.05	30	26.69
Arts	30	32.33	30	29.98
Commerce	30	29.81	30	27.21

Table 7.1 Evaluation between the average mean of the level of examination stress and anxiety students go through

The above table 7.1 shows the comparison between the average mean of the level of examination stress and anxiety students go through. The research was done to find out the examination stress and anxiety of students from class 10th and 12th. When the Mean value of examination stress and anxiety among the 12th students of Science, Arts and Commerce stream are compared, it can be seen that the students Science and Arts stream do not have much difference during their 10th class i.e., before selecting their subjects of their choice. This may be due to same syllabus being studied by all students. But during the 12th class the students from Arts stream feel more anxious than the students of Science and Commerce. This may be due to the nature of the subjects.

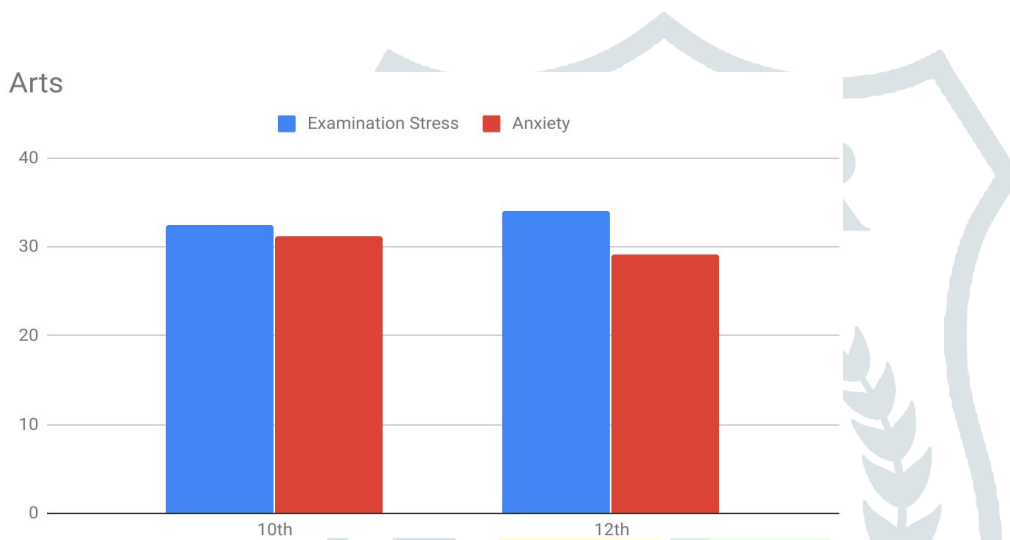
Science Students



The graph showing level of anxiety and stress in students with science stream.

Science			Mean
	Examination stress	10th	30.5
		12th	31.23
	Anxiety	10th	25.2
12th		28.9	

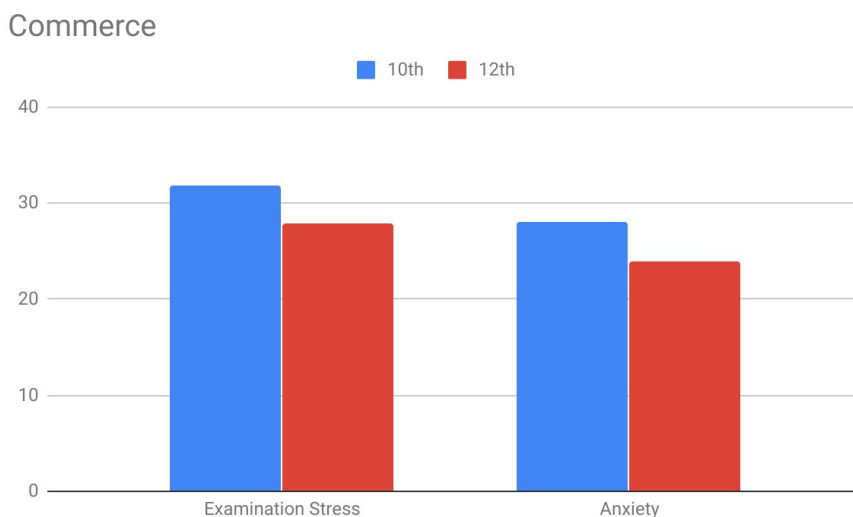
Table 7.2 Data



The graph showing the level of stress and anxiety in the students of arts stream.

Arts			Mean
	Examination stress	10th	32.45
		12th	34
	Anxiety	10th	31.2
12th		29.08	

Table7.3 Data



The graph showing the level of stress and anxiety in the students with commerce background

Commerce			Mean
	Examination Stress	10th	
12th			27.8
Anxiety	10th		28.1
	12th		24

Table 7.4 Data

The results obtained from the current study show that majority of the board exam (both 10th and 12th) going students experience moderate levels of anxiety which is in agreement with previous studies conducted among school students (Fig-1.1, Fig-1.2). Pressure from school and parents, the lengthy format of Indian state government board exams, and heavy subject contents are some important factors that contribute to increased anxiety among students. It is already reported that students of classes going to write the board exam, the 10th and 12th, (Fig1.2) present significantly higher levels of depression, anxiety, and stress compared to the students from 9th and 11th grade. We further found that the anxiety levels in science students that manifested itself in 12th standard students were higher than students from 10th. Fig. 1.1 and Table 1.2 shows Average mean of students of class 10th in terms of their examination stress and anxiety as 30.5 and 25.2 respectively which when compared to that of the Average Mean of students of class 12th stood at 31.23 and 28.9 respectively. This could be because 12th standard is considered as a turning point in a student’s life after which they enter into university studies. Fig. 1.2 and table-1.3 shows how anxiety level fluctuates and somewhere remains more in the students of class 10th as examination anxiety of a 10th class students in terms of its Average Mean was 32.45 while the level of stress a 12th class students goes through in terms of its Average Mean was 29.08.

VIII. DISCUSSIONS OF THE FINDINGS

The study revealed that anxiety during the examination affects students extensively and is a hindrance towards growth and success of the adolescents. Managing stress and anxiety when supported by the guidance of parents, elders or school management is found to be comparatively better. The guidelines to be followed by the adolescents, family and the counsellors to manage anxiety of students during examinations are as follows:-

- Maintaining good study habits.
- Counselling to help adolescents to cope with physical and mental changes faced by them.
- Adequate sleep and healthy diet.
- Adopting meditation and yoga for relaxation of the mind .
- Instructing students on techniques to beat anxiety during examination.

The study brought to light the different reasons of anxiety.

1. Prioritization of issues regarding preparation.
2. Lack of confidence
3. Family pressure for attaining high performance standards.
4. Lack of training and aptitude in taking tests.
5. Peer pressure to outperform each other.

IX. CONCLUSION

1. High Stress and anxiety levels during examinations is a major factor that impedes performance.
2. Excessive pressure retards the pace at which a student plans, thinks and performs in an examination.
3. Anxiety and stress reduces clarity of thought and action.
4. Anxiety is related to levels of nervousness of the students.
5. The students of Arts stream top the charts on levels of examination stress and nervousness followed by students of Commerce stream.
6. Minimal measure of examination stress and uneasiness was found among students of science stream.
7. Students of 10th standard feel pretty much equivalent level of pressure and tension amid examinations i.e. before selecting their stream of choice..
8. More accentuation is required on understanding the effect of examinations on understudies, on distinguishing defenseless people, and on the fittingness of the present examination process.

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