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## EFFECT OF ACADEMIC BUOYANCY ON ACADEMIC STRESS

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### Abstract

*The concept of stress has been under the scrutiny of researchers from the 1950s. It continues to remain so by stimulating interest in different disciplines including health psychology, organizational psychology, biological psychology and relatively newer disciplines such as psychoneuroimmunology. In order to delve into the concept of academic stress, it becomes imperative first to understand how stress is defined as a construct and its consequences on an individual. Studies identify stress as characteristics of a situation (for example, job interviews are seen as stressful situations), while others throw light on how it should be viewed as a response to a situation; a subjective experience associated with different feelings such as worry and tension. Stress is now seen as a lifestyle crisis and affects any and every individual regardless of the stage of life they are in. The*

*adolescent life stage becomes a crucial period that makes them highly vulnerable to the various stressors in the environment. It is a universally recognized life stage where there is a transformation from child to adult. It is an important stage of change and development and the body goes through various physical and biological changes. The transition is not limited to just the bodily changes and social role, but even at the institutional setting, the change from high school to higher secondary level requires a lot of adjustment and change. Multiple related and inter-related stressors make this process of transition highly stressful for the adolescent. Martin and Marsh introduced the idea of academic buoyancy. It is the ability of an individual to manage academic challenges and other challenges of schooling. Academic buoyancy comprises 5Cs- namely confidence, coordination, commitment, composure and control. These are the five aspects of academic buoyancy which are significant motivational predictors. Academic buoyancy is very important for success in academics because it gives them the capacity to meet challenges and impediments in the education system. This paper has reviewed the related studies to understand the significant role of Academic buoyancy on stress among adolescents.*

**Key words:** Academic buoyancy, Academic stress, Adolescents.

## **Introduction**

The concept of stress has been under the scrutiny of researchers from the 1950s. It continues to remain so by stimulating interest in different disciplines including health psychology, organizational psychology, biological psychology and relatively newer disciplines such as psychoneuroimmunology. In order to delve into the concept of academic stress, it becomes imperative first to understand how stress is defined as a construct and its consequences on an individual.

Studies identify stress as characteristics of a situation (for example, job interviews are seen as stressful situations), while others throw light on how it should be viewed as a response to a situation; a subjective experience associated with different feelings such as worry and tension. Stress is now seen as a lifestyle crisis and affects any and every individual regardless of the stage of life they are in.

The pioneering works of Selye (1956) recognised stress as a response to threatful situations in the environment. He explains that certain levels of stress are inevitable in our lives and cannot be escaped. When individuals are unable to deal with excessive demands in the environment and lack the resources to cope with the same, it becomes highly improbable to ensure that they will lead a successful and satisfying life. These demands or causes are known as stressors. It becomes equally essential to ascertain that the concepts of stress and anxiety have been used interchangeably in the literature.

Anxiety is often described as a reaction to a stressor. In most cases, it helps the individual cope with the situation and uses the resources. Excessive anxiety that becomes overwhelming and interferes with the day-to-

day functioning becomes cumbersome to the individual and his/her immediate environment. Anxiety is how an individual relates to, understands and interprets stress.

### **Academic buoyancy**

Academic buoyancy is the competence of a person to get over failures and uncertain situations in life. In an educational setting, time bound assignment completion, challenges of repeated tests and other socio-economic pressures are challenges a student has to face every day. Martin and Marsh postulated the idea of academic buoyancy as an ability of an individual to manage academic challenges and other challenges of schooling. Academic buoyancy comprises 5Cs- confidence, coordination, commitment, composure and control. These are the five aspects of academic buoyancy which are significant motivational predictors. Academic buoyancy is a very important factor for academic success because it gives them the capacity to meet challenges and impediments in the education system.

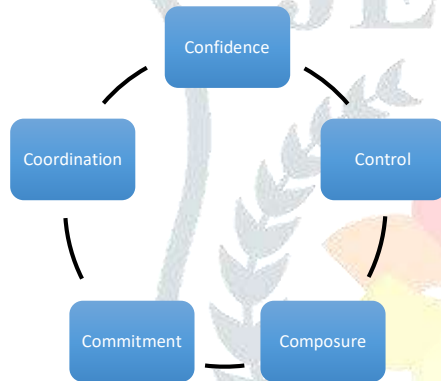
A complex group of skills are involved in academic performance and achievement. Some behaviours and traits are intrinsic to students and are influenced by the academic environment. Although learning is a cognitive skill, other factors like motivation, perseverance and emotional regulation are equally significant in academic achievements. The flipside of the system is that this aspect cannot be quantified and measured through formal tests which are used to measure cognitive aspects of learning. Academic buoyancy involves interplay of factors like thought, action and emotion.

Academic achievement demands many forms of resilience, academic buoyancy is one of the many types of resilience needed to face the challenges of school work. Academic resilience is a broader definition whereas academic buoyancy is specific and narrowly focused on target aimed task accomplishment. Resilience did not fully explain the coping skills needed to face the challenges like a poor grade in a test or completing tasks based on deadlines and the anxiety at the time of year end examinations. Academic buoyancy is a concept about certain psychological attributes and skills that help students to prevent problems from getting complicated. These skills are now covered in a unified construct namely academic buoyancy which is a sub-category of resilience enabling students to face daily challenges of academic life

There is something in the personality of each human being that enables him/her to regulate emotions and stay emotionally balanced in the face of challenges. Academic buoyancy encompasses several factors of motivation. Martin and Marsh have extensively investigated this concept and postulated a five factor model of academic buoyancy consisting of confidence, coordination, control, composure and commitment (Martin et al., 2010). Academic buoyancy has been found to positively correlate with the five Cs. It is understandably a fact that the students who bounce back from setbacks are found to possess a high level of the five C components.

The capacity to cope with school related work and ability to regulate emotions when facing setbacks are important for academic achievement and academic buoyancy enables students to do this. Martin and Marsh have elaborated the five factor model of academic buoyancy in the following way;

1. Confidence (self-efficacy): The belief in our ability to control our own learning outcomes.
2. Coordination: The ability to plan for academic success and have some kind of idea about the desired outcomes.
3. Control: To know how we are doing, how we can improve, and what to do when we encounter some kind of roadblock.
4. Composure: The propensity to cope with anxiety in a positive way.
5. Commitment: The ability to persist when the going gets tough.



The concept of academic buoyancy has taken ideas from different psychological traditions such as behavioral economics, it explains why and how people make complex decisions. Buoyancy is about behavior change. Achievement of goals needs to look at how current behavior helps or prevent one from attaining it. It is very important to help a student to be productive, successful, healthy, happy, compassionate and kind. Teachers often impose rules and routines that are automatic and help in creating a favorable environment of hard work and shared values. Teachers always try to improve their own behavior to effectively manage students and to form positive relationships with students. A better understanding about human nature, our strength, weakness and biases is essential for behavior change which can yield long term benefits for students.

Life skills are developed in schools which are useful in adulthood. The subjects taught may not have a direct application in life, schools develop general life skills. It includes interpersonal communication skills and goal setting in order to prepare for examinations and help them to plan their life as a grown up person. Academic buoyancy is not just about meeting the challenges of school activities but it can be useful far beyond their school life and they can use it in their future life as well.



Academic buoyancy is a relatively new concept that got acceptance through research. It is generally understood as the student's ability to meet the challenges in an academic setting. It is defined as skill to face, "academic setbacks and challenges that are typical of the ordinary course of school life" (Martin & Marsh, 2008), It is a positive psychology concept that has a positive connection with many aspects of academic performance. It obviously has to have an impact on academic stress. Martin & Marsh (2008) studied about academic buoyancy among Australian students. The study was in a sample of 3450 students and found that academic buoyancy was positively correlated with better class attendance, successful completion of home assignments and higher literacy skill. Another study established the connection between academic buoyancy and academic performance. (Miller, Connolly & Maguire, 2013). In another study academic buoyancy was seen as a factor in emotional stability and neuroticism. Better emotional stability and low neuroticism were confirmed in students who had higher scores in academic buoyancy. (Martin, Ginns, Brackett, Malmberg & Hall, 2013). Academic buoyancy helped to lower the impact of such stressors. (Putwain, Connors, Symes & Douglas-Osborn, 2012; Putwain et al., 2015). In short, academic buoyancy clearly helps students to reduce academic stress and it is a strong predictor of adjustment with stressors related to the educational system.

### **Academic stress**

The term 'stress' has become a very common word used in everyday vocabulary. Stress may be defined as a force, which influences an individual in causing him to respond to it and cope with it in a way that causes strain. According to Lazarus (1984), "Stress is inharmonious fit between person and the environment, one in which the person's resource are taxed or exceeded, forcing the person to struggle, usually in complex ways and to cope with." He says that stress is a feeling of tension that is either emotional or physical. "(Stress is an emotional response to distress or to some unexpected challenges in connection with failure in examination, or expectation failure or even a feeling in mind about the possibility of such failure" (Gupta and Khan, 1987). Baum (1990) defines stress as a condition of negative emotional experience along with some biochemical, physiological, cognitive and behavioural changes that are caused by the stressful events. Chrousos and Gold (1992) says that stress is "the state of disharmony or threatened homeostasis", meaning Stress is anything that forces up on someone an extra demand to cope with something that is new and completely different.

Academic stress is the feeling of stress that students undergo when the pressures of education and school system far exceed their ability to cope. It is a mental feeling state of a person who is under an uncontrollable situation or it demands skill exceeding one's ability or resources. Stress in learning is caused partially or fully by the school system and other systemic factors such as examinations, competitions, teaching process, teacher's behaviour to learners, and things like classroom condition and general academic and co-curricular activities. Stress up to some extent can be useful for physical wellbeing as many students realize their full potential only when under considerable stress. However, excessive and continuous stress leads to maladaptive behavior. Exam Anxiety, Success versus Failure, Personality and Competition, factors such as home, school, peers etc are some major stressors in an academic situation.

In short it is the increasing severity of academic pressure and the resultant stress for long periods can cause emotional stress and fear in the students. It will negatively affect their confidence, examination performance, emotional wellbeing, methods of learning and manner of coping. A large number of research findings on this shows that there is a mounting academic stress in the students from year to year. The cause of stress may be different in different educational systems depending on the person. This condition will most often lead to a burnout, which later manifests as somatic symptoms like exhaustion, and psychological symptoms like feeling of low self-esteem in students.

While certain levels of academic stress are known to push students towards performing well; commonly known as eustress, if it is not managed well and exceeds the optimum level, it can have dire consequences for the student. Academic stress is the result of the fact that the individual potential or personality of the student is rarely taken into consideration and he/she is only deemed worthy if their academic performance is on the higher spectrum. Vocational and individual qualities often took a back-seat when describing a student and in fact, worth was determined by their academic grades. The relationship between high academic stress and suicidal ideations were also observed among students. Many students who reported high academic stress levels were referred from academic settings to psychiatric units as there were cases of depression, phobia, anxiety and other behavioural problems.

## Review of Literature

### Studies Related to Academic Buoyancy

**Andrew Martin Herbert Marsh (2008).** Academic buoyancy was a concept developed to understand students' perseverance to face academic challenges. A study was conducted at five Australian high schools. A group of 598 students were tested for academic buoyancy and a few other factors like self-efficacy, anxiety, academic engagement, and control and teacher–student relationship. Multilevel modeling found that the majority of variance in educational buoyancy was explained at the scholar level. substantive correlational analysis and structural equation modeling showed that (a) Time one anxiety (negatively), self-efficacy, and educational engagement considerably predict Time one educational buoyancy; (b) Time two anxiety (negatively), self-efficacy, educational engagement, and teacher–student relationships make a case for variance in Time two educational buoyancy over and on top of that explained by educational buoyancy at Time 1; and (c) of the many predictors, anxiety explains the majority of variance in educational buoyancy.

**Andrew Martin Susan Colmar Louise Davey Herbert Marsh (2010)** The study seeks to clearly establish the significance of motivation on academic buoyancy over and on top of previous academic buoyancy. 1,866 students from six high schools were selected for the study. When variance in academic buoyancy was controlled, the 5Cs were found to be vital predictors of sequent academic buoyancy. Prior academic buoyancy and later academic buoyancy were found to have been a mediating influence by the 5 C of academic buoyancy. It shows that students need academic buoyancy to effectively function in an ever-challenging school environment.

**Davie Putwain, Anthony Daly (2013)** This was a study taken up to find whether students could be classified on the basis of their test anxiety and academic buoyancy score in terms of their performance in tests. The researchers classified 469 students into five different groups based on their level anxiety as high test anxiety/low academic buoyancy, the second group was mid test anxiety/middle level academic buoyancy and the third group were low test anxiety/high academic buoyancy. The remaining two groups of students were with middle-high level test anxiety and middle-high academic buoyancy. Outcome in test score shows that the groups having low level of test anxiety/ high level of academic buoyancy or mid test anxiety/ high academic buoyancy had better scores whereas those groups with high level of test anxiety/ low level of academic buoyancy scored poorly in tests. This shows that academic buoyancy can significantly bring down test anxiety and improve test performance.

**Andrew Martin, Herbert Marsh (2007)** This study was conducted on high school students and school personnel. It was on a large sample. Buoyancy Scale, the Motivation and Engagement Scale and cognate measures were administered to 3450 students and 637 school personnel. It was found that males were more buoyant in both the groups. Higher buoyancy was found in the younger members in the student sample whereas in the working group higher buoyancy was found in the elder group. There was a significant matching across samples in main aspects in buoyancy and hypothesized correlates.

**Hirvonen et al (2019)** It was a study to find academic buoyancy, temperament and school-related stress. A large number of students became part of the study. The study was conducted among 845 students. The test results show that greater academic buoyancy score, effortful control and negative affectivity score at the beginning of the year resulted in low stress at school related activities when measured at the end of the academic year. The research outcome is suggestive that activities that improve academic buoyancy will reduce academic stress.

**Martin & Marsh (2009).** “Academic resilience and academic buoyancy: Multidimensional and hierarchical conceptual framing of causes correlates and cognate constructs was the topic of research in this study. It was convinced that the construct of academic resilience does not fully explain the capacity of a student to face the everyday challenges and demands of the academic system. Academic buoyancy is a concept that reflects a student’s emotional stability in meeting the challenges of daily life. This research formulated a conceptual and empirical framework for research in academic resilience and academic buoyancy and also about developing indicators of buoyancy and resilience. They suggest that academic resilience and academic buoyancy are a multi-dimensional study to form concepts and develop measurement tools to distinctly understand various factors that constitute it.

**Martin & Marsh (2008)** the concept of academic buoyancy reflected a student’s bounciness when met with setbacks in an academic atmosphere such as poor grades, assignment submission in time, pressures of tests and course work. This was a study conducted in Australian schools on a sample of 598 students in the age group of 8 and 10 years. The conclusion of the study was that academic buoyancy was positively correlated with self-

efficacy, academic work and teacher student relationship. Moreover academic buoyancy was found to be negatively correlated with anxiety.

**Miller, Connolly, & Maguire (2013).** This was a study to understand the relationship between wellbeing of students and their academic achievements. 1081 students in the age group of 7 to 11 from Northern Ireland participated in the study. Findings from the study shows that psychological well-being and academic buoyancy are significantly correlated with academic achievement.

**Putwain et al (2015).** This research was aimed to find the effect of academic buoyancy on test anxiety and if it had any impact on academic outcome. 705 secondary school students were included in the study and the research outcome shows that higher academic buoyancy reduced examination anxiety and helped them to perform better in tests. In short, academic buoyancy was a strong protective factor to reduce examination phobia.

**Symes, Putwain & Remedios, (2015)** Here the topic of investigation was “the enabling and protective role of academic buoyancy in the appraisal of fear appeals used prior to high stakes examinations.” Teacher usually use ‘fear’ to make students serious about their studies. Especially when it comes to examinations. Here the research studies whether academic buoyancy had any implications in the way students appraised these teacher threats. 770 students in England participated in this study. They self-reported the frequency their teachers ‘fear appeals’ in class and how they perceived this. When it was compared to their academic buoyancy score, the study indicates that students with higher academic buoyancy showed less threat appraisal. In other words, teacher appeals of threat had less impact on students with higher academic buoyancy.

### **Studies Related to Academic Stress**

**Jesús de la Fuente et al (2020)** completed a study of the strategies of students to cope with academic stress and how self-regulation enabled them to face emotional problems. The study brought to light the fact that regulatory teaching and self-regulation had significantly influenced coping strategies. Another aspect was that external regulation and self-regulation shaped the coping strategies used. This combination of the two can predict coping strategies students will use in their everyday life.

**Abbas Abdollahi et al (2020)** studied academic stress and its long term implications like a feeling of oneness with the school. It was found that academic stress had affected their emotional health and that hardiness had a mediating effect on this. The two factors .i.e sense of belongingness with the school and academic hardiness were found to be significantly predictive of academic stress. The study recommends that developing academic hardiness and feeling of belongingness will help in reducing academic stress experienced by students.

**Ingunn Marie Eriksen (2020)** academic pressures on students have increased in recent years resulting in mental health problems among adolescent students. This paper discusses a study made among middle class parents in Norway; it deals with their school stress, parental values and parental practices with respect to their school



achievement. It was found that parental pressure to achieve more was related to mental health problems and their self-worth was based on achievement.

**Omar et al (2020)** found that students are affected in many ways by pressure of performance and their life at the university is seriously made miserable. This causes a lot of pressure on students. Stress and academic pressure drive a good number of them to drugs, suicide and a good number of them drop out of college. Some of them develop depression and anxiety. Academic stress is caused by factors like examinations, class assignments, teacher and parental expectations etc. This paper is based on study made at Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM). It was revealed that most students suffered academic stress and were badly affected by test results and peer pressure.

**Priyanka et al (2020)** investigated academic stress among adolescents as a great concern worldwide, stress has physical, psychological and behavioral aspects to it. This study was conducted among postgraduate students in CCS HAU, Hisar. The study has clearly shown that academic stress and depression were significantly correlated in a sample of 20 female and 20 male postgraduate students. When the result was compared the female students suffered more from academic stress while the male students suffered more from depression.

**Hadi Pajarianto et al (2020)**, the Ministry of Education in Indonesia moved to study from a home model making use of digital technology platforms like the zoom, google classroom and other online facilities due to the Covid !9 pandemic. This study focused on the relationship of religiosity and academic stress, relationship of teacher support and academic stress, relationship of parental support and academic stress, and the involvement of school, teacher and parent support to academics. It was reported that there was a positive and significant relationship in factors like religiosity, school support, parents and teachers and academic stress.

**Cherry, & Wilcox (2020)**. Conducted research on the topic, Decreasing perceived and academic stress through emotion regulation and non-judging with trauma-suffered learners. "The aim of this research work was to find whether regulation of emotion and non-judgmental attitude could be improved in trauma-experience college learners through mindfulness straining, and if this practice could decrease academic stress. It reveals that mindfulness based training could reduce academic stress by improving emotion control and positive attitude in shock experienced students.

**Michaela Cpascoe et al(2019)** The aim of the study was to find the influence of academic- stress, the influence of it on learning capacity of students and test output, other problems like depression and anxiety, sleep problems and drug abuse. The sample population under study was students from Students in secondary and tertiary school systems. The study shows that stress in connection with education, has shown the effect of it on students' life in multiple areas like learning ability, test performance, education and future job success. The health aspects like quality of sleep and quantity of sleep, physical and mental health also improved. Developing students' stress management skills is very helpful in changing this.

**Yonghua Chen et al (2020)** conducted research on the topic, “Higher Academic Stress was Associated with Increased Risk of Overweight and Obesity among College Students in China.” The study was made on the sample population of 27,343 college students in China. The study shows that most students experienced increased levels of stress and negative learning experiences. Stress and bad learning experiences could result in increasing the risk of overweight and obesity. They should be trained to reduce stress among college students because it will improve their health by reducing overweight and obesity.

**Naizhu Huanget al (2020)** this was a research taken up to investigate “How Incivility and Academic Stress Influence Psychological Health among College Students: The Moderating Role of Gratitude”. The aim of this study was to see the connection between incivility, stress, and psychological well being. It was also designed to investigate the moderating role of gratitude. The study was done on a sample population of 30,000 students, of which 28,000 were undergraduates and 2000 were graduates. The major findings from the study were this: most of the college students were experiencing a high degree of academic stress and negative learning experiences. Academic stress and negative learning experiences have the risk of attaining overweight and obesity. Therefore training interventions are to be designed and used to reduce academic stress in college students because it will improve their health by reducing overweight and obesity.

**Erina Macgeorge, Wendy Samter, & Seth J Gillihan (2007)** conducted research on the topic, “Academic Stress, Supportive Communication, and Health”. The research was undertaken to investigate how communication from friends and family in a supportive manner helps to reduce the connection between academic stress and health in students. Results are suggestive that there is a positive relation between stress and intensity of depression when support increases. This study also brings to light the fact that emotional support was negatively related with depression in academic stress. The research findings are very significant to manage negative health outcomes for students experiencing academic stress.

Review of literature on academic stress reveals that academic stress affects students’ ability grasp, academic output, higher education and career success in future. Moreover there is compelling evidence on health benefits like improving quality and duration of sleep, and improving physical health, mental health and eliminating substance abuse outcomes.

## **Conclusion**

Academic buoyancy is significantly correlated with academic stress in general. Review of literature on academic stress reveals that academic stress affects students’ ability to grasp and produce academic output, they perform better in higher education and later their career success in future. Academic buoyancy plays a very vital role in managing stress. Evidence from literature suggests that academic buoyancy significantly correlates with students’ perseverance to deal with stress. The five Cs of academic buoyancy viz; confidence, coordination, control, composure, commitment helped the students to effectively function in an ever-challenging school environment.

In today's competitive time, people look at educational success of their children as a social status symbol and moreover most of them believe that academic success is the one and only way to a successful career. This has resulted in mounting pressure on the children and it gets worse at Secondary level because most of the future career choices are made based on grades at this point. This situation causes a lot of emotional stress to the children in this age group. Day by day there is an increasing academic stress among secondary level adolescents due to systemic demands. This review analysis is an attempt to examine those factors and cognitive traits that may serve to face the situation, minimize the risk and facilitate academic performance.

In short, academic buoyancy significantly reduces academic stress. The evidence from the study is also suggestive that academic buoyancy reduces test anxiety and anxiety in general. The studies, in addition to this, indicate that academic buoyancy improves psychological well-being and academic achievement. Another area of significant influence is test performance; students with high scores in academic buoyancy show no sign of examination phobia.

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