'Please prepare me not for examination but for life': The Psycho-Social Issues Influencing Educational System -- An Ethnographic Study among the Students of Private Schools of Barasat, North 24 Parganas, West Bengal

Nabanita Dhar[1], Dr. Abhijit Das[2], Jaydeep Mondal[3]

[1]DST Inspire Fellow, Dept. of Anthropology, WBSU, [2]Associate Professor, Dept. of Anthropology, WBSU, [3]Assistant Professor, Dept. of Anthropology, APC College

Abstract:

The educational system shapes students' socialization through its structure, curriculum, and interactions with peers and educators. Mentors play a crucial role in guiding students through the cultural norms, values, and expectations of the educational community. Peer interactions within the educational setting provide opportunities for social learning, collaboration, and the development of interpersonal skills. This research article examines the psycho-social dynamics in the educational system, focusing on the experiences of 220 students enrolled in grades 11 and 12, aged between 16 to 18 years, studying in private schools in Barasat. Employing a mixed-methods approach, data collection involved interviews, observation, questionnaire, schedule and psychological testing, including the Depression, Anxiety, Stress Scale (DASS), and assessments for academic stress, parental pressure, and exam anxiety. The study investigates the levels of exam anxiety, academic stress and parental pressure among the students and to interpret a preliminary suggestive domain of the strategies for future planning. Findings reveal varying levels of depression, anxiety, and stress among students, alongside assessments of academic stress, parental pressure, and exam anxiety. This study underscores the importance of addressing mental health concerns alongside academic and social development within the educational system, particularly in private schools of Barasat.

Key words: Educational system, Psycho-social Aspects, DASS, Parental pressure, Exam anxiety, Academic Stress.

Introduction: Education is a part of culture like ritual. It is one of the ubiquitous aspects of present day society and culture. In its technical sense, education is the process by which society deliberately transmits its accumulating knowledge, skill, and values from one generation to another. In this sense, it is equivalent to what social scientists term socialization or enculturation (Browning, 1999). Education is intended to control them in learning a culture, shaping their conduct in the methods of adulthood, and guiding them toward their possible part in the public arena. In the primitive societies, there is frequently minimal conventional learning—little of what

one would normally call school or classes or educators. Instead, the entire environment and all activities are frequently viewed as school and classes, and many or all adults act as teachers (Naka, 1999).

In anthropological paradigm important development took place with a major conference in 1954 on Education and Anthropology by George Spindler jointly sponsored by American Anthropological Association (AAA) and the Department of Anthropology and School of Education at Stanford University. For the Spindler's, education is the process of transmitting culture which includes skills, knowledge, attitudes, and values, as well as discrete elements of behavior (Spindler, 2000). Education is a process whose function is to bring individual behavior into line with the specific requirements of a culture. (Herskovits, 1955). Franz Boas (1962) stated anthropological research offers, a means of determining what may be expected of children of different ages and this knowledge is of considerable value for regulating educational methods.Defining education as "the deliberate, systematic, and sustained effort to transmit, evoke, or acquire knowledge, values, attitudes, skills, or sensibilities, as well as any learning that results from the effort, direct or indirect, intended or unintended" (Cremin, 1976). In contemporary educational discourse, the importance of understanding the psycho-social dynamics of student socialization and enculturation within the educational system cannot be overstated. As students navigate the complexities of academic environments, they are not only shaped by curriculum content and instructional methodologies but also by the social interactions and cultural milieu prevalent within their educational settings. The role of mentors, peers, and institutional structures in guiding students through this process is pivotal, influencing their academic performance, emotional well-being, and overall development. Cultural backgrounds influence students' socialization experiences by shaping their perspectives, behaviors, and interactions within the educational environment. Positive socialization experiences contribute to improved academic performance, social skills development, and overall student well-being. Socioeconomic factors such as access to resources, family support, and community opportunities can impact students' socialization and enculturation experiences within the educational system.

Aim and objectives:

1. To examine the levels of exam anxiety, academic stress and parental pressure among the students and
2. To interpret a preliminary suggestive domain of the strategies for future planning.

Unit of Observation and Area of the Study:

Students of grades 11 and 12, aged between 16 to 18 years, studying in private schools in Barasat, North 24 Parganas, West Bengal.

Methodology:

Primary data collection has been involved Intensive Interviews, Direct Observation, Questionnaire, Schedule and Psychological testing, including the Depression, Anxiety, Stress Scale (DASS), and assessments for academic stress, parental pressure, and exam anxiety. Focusing on the experiences of 220 students which have been selected purposively for the present study.

Discussion and Interpretation: The educational system shapes students' socialization by providing structured environments where they learn societal norms, values, and behaviors through interactions with peers and educators. These interactions occur both inside and outside the classroom, influencing students' understanding of social roles and expectations. Additionally, the curriculum content and teaching methodologies influence students' perspectives on various social issues, fostering critical thinking and social awareness. Overall, the educational system acts as a microcosm of society, contributing to the socialization process by providing opportunities for students to engage with diverse perspectives and experiences. Mentors, whether teachers, professors, or older students, play a crucial role in guiding students through the cultural norms, values, and expectations of the educational community. They serve as role models, offering guidance and support to help students navigate academic and social challenges. Mentors facilitate students' integration into the academic community by providing insights into academic practices, social norms, and institutional policies. Through mentorship, students not only acquire academic knowledge but also develop interpersonal skills, confidence, and a sense of belonging within the educational environment.

Table 1: Description of the Sample (Unit of Study) - N=220

Student's Criteria	Count	%
Sex		
Male	82	37.27
Female	138	62.72
Age (Years)		
16	118	53.63
17	78	35.45
18	24	10.9
Grade		
11	132	60
12	88	40
Mother's Education		
Non-graduate	138	62.72
Graduate/Postgraduate	82	37.27
Father's Education		

Non-graduate	92	41.81
Graduate/Postgraduate	128	58.18
Mother's Occupation		
Business	52	23.63
Service	27	12.27
Homemaker	141	64.09
Father's Occupation		
Business	98	44.54
Service	122	55.45
Unemployed	0	0

Continuation of Table 2:

Student's Criteria	Count	%
Family Income		
Less than 50,000 pm	154	70
More than 50,000 pm	66	30
Number of private tutors		
None	24	10.9
1 - 2	72	32.72
3 – 4+	124	56.36
Extra-curricular Activity		
Yes	142	64.54
No	78	35.45
Academic Performance		
Good/Very Good	36	16.36
Moderate	148	67.27
Not so good	36	16.36

Analysis: There are more females (138) than males (82), making up 62.72% and 37.27% respectively. And majority of students fall into the 16 (53.63%) and 17 (35.45%) age brackets, with a smaller percentage at 18 (10.9%).A higher percentage of mothers (62.72%) and fathers (58.18%) are non-graduates, with the remaining being graduates/postgraduates. Most of the mothers (64.09%) are homemaker, while the majority of fathers are either in business (44.54%) or service (55.45%).

Table 3: Academic Stress, Parental Pressure and Exam Anxiety observed among students (N=220)

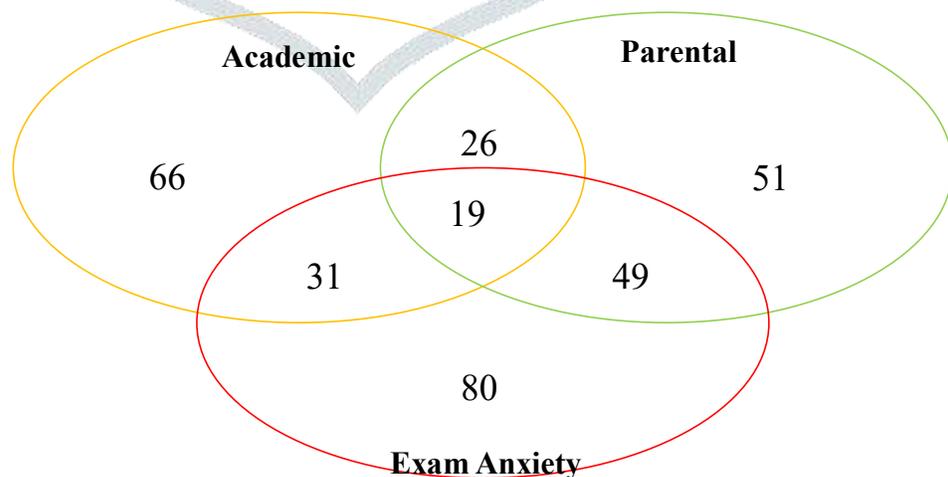| Variable	Academic Stress	Parental Pressure	Exam Anxiety
		Sex	
Male	31	47	45
Female	111	98	134
		Age	
16	58	59	83
17	49	53	60
18	35	33	36
		Class	
XI	77	86	109
XII	65	59	70
Total	**142**	**145**	**179**

Fig. 1:

From the above table and diagram, here are the few key observations:

- Total sample size of the students (a unit of study): 220. Out of which numbers for individual variables are considered as:

Academic Stress - 142

Parental Pressure – 145

Exam Anxiety - 179

- Number of Students facing both Academic stress & Parental pressure are : 26

- Number of Students facing both Academic stress & Exam anxiety are : 31

- Number of Students facing both Parental pressure & Exam anxiety are: 49

- Number of Students facing all three types of variables are : 19

- More number of male students are facing Parental stress whereas more number of female students are facing Exam anxiety.

- Maximum numbers of students are facing Exam anxiety (179) and the number of students facing Academic stress & Parental pressure are almost same.

- More number of students in class XI are facing all three types of stresses as compared to class XII students.

- **Table 4: Levels of Depression, Anxiety and Stress (N=220)**

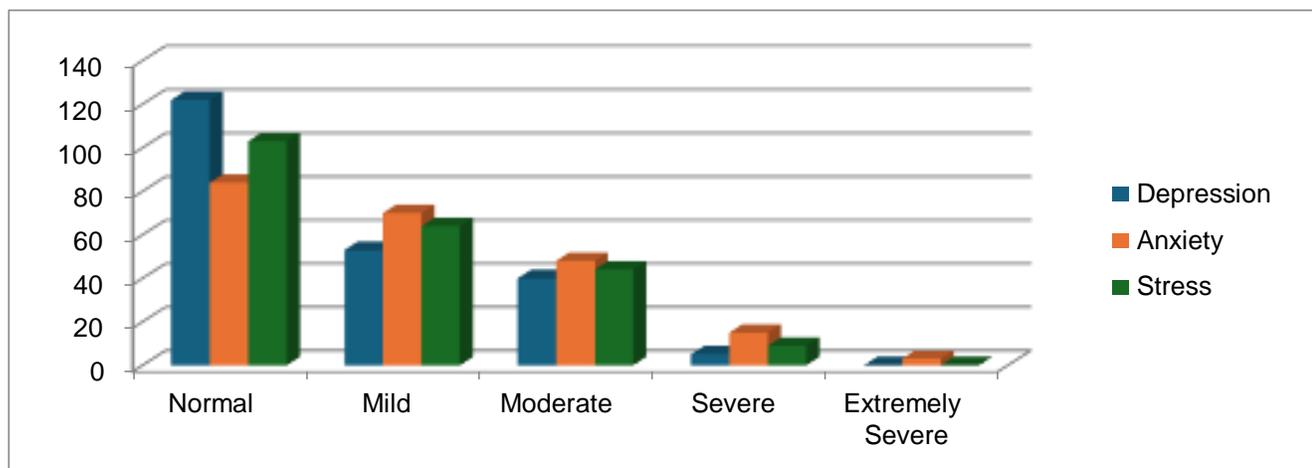|	Depression	Anxiety	Stress
Normal	122	84	103
Mild	53	70	64
Moderate	40	48	44
Severe	5	15	9
Extremely Severe	0	3	0

Fig: 2

From the above table and diagram, here are the few key observations:

- The majority of individuals fall within the normal range (122), followed by mild (53), moderate (40), and severe (5) levels of depression. This indicates that a significant portion of the population experiences symptoms of depression, with a smaller percentage exhibiting more severe symptoms.

- Similar to depression, the highest number of individuals fall within the normal range (84), followed by mild (70), moderate (48), and severe (15) levels of anxiety. This suggests that anxiety levels are also prevalent among the population, with a notable proportion experiencing mild to moderate symptoms.

- Again, the largest proportion of individuals falls within the normal range (103), followed by mild (64), moderate (44), and severe (9) levels of stress. This indicates that while a substantial portion of the population experiences stress within a normal range, there is also a notable presence of mild to moderate stress levels.

Concluding Observations and Suggestive Strategies for Future Planning:

The alarming levels of academic stress, parental pressure, and exam anxiety experienced by students highlight the pressing need for immediate attention. These challenges, if left unaddressed, risk compromising not only students' mental well-being but also their overall academic performance and personal growth. It is imperative that comprehensive interventions be implemented to alleviate these pressures and create a more supportive educational environment. Collaboration among educators, parents, policymakers, and mental health professionals is essential in developing sustainable solutions to address the underlying causes of these issues. By prioritizing the holistic development of students and fostering a culture of well-being, schools can strive towards a future where academic success is synonymous with emotional resilience and personal fulfilment.

The findings of this research underscore the significant prevalence of moderate and severe levels of depression, anxiety, and stress among the studied population. These results highlight the pressing need for further investigation into the factors contributing to mental health challenges and the development of targeted interventions. It is evident that a comprehensive approach is required to address the multifaceted nature of these

issues, emphasizing collaboration among researchers, healthcare professionals, policymakers, and community stakeholders.

Suggestive Measures for the Future:

1. Implementing holistic education approaches that prioritize students' emotional and mental well-being alongside academic achievement.

2. Providing accessible and confidential counselling services within educational institutions to support students dealing with stress and anxiety.

3. Educating parents about the detrimental effects of excessive pressure and fostering open communication channels between parents, students, and educators.

4. Introducing mindfulness and relaxation techniques in the curriculum to help students manage stress effectively.

5. Promoting a balanced lifestyle that includes adequate rest, physical activity, and leisure time to counteract the negative effects of academic pressure.

6. Encouraging a supportive and nurturing school environment where mistakes are viewed as opportunities for learning and growth rather than failures.

7. Advocating for policies that reduce the emphasis on standardized testing and promote alternative forms of assessment that measure diverse skill sets and abilities.

8. Collaborating with mental health professionals, educators, policymakers, and parents to create a collective effort in addressing the root causes of academic stress, parental pressure, and exam anxiety.

By prioritizing the well-being of students and fostering a supportive environment, it can be created a future where young minds thrive academically, emotionally, and socially.

Reference

1. Anand, M. (2018). 'Gender Understandings among Teachers and Students: Discourses from Delhi', South Asia Research, 38(3), pp. 307–326.
2. Boas, F. (1962). Anthropology and Modern Life. New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc.
3. Brown, T. A., Chorpita, B. F., Korotitsch, W., & Barlow, D. H. (1997). 'Psychometric properties of the Depression Anxiety Stress Scales (DASS) in clinical samples', Behaviour Research and Therapy, 35, pp. 79–89.

4. Crawford, J. R., & Henry, J. D. (2003). 'The Depression Anxiety Stress Scales (DASS): Normative data and latent structure in a large non-clinical sample', British Journal of Clinical Psychology, 42, pp. 111–121.

5. Cremin, L. (1976). Public Education. New York: Basic Books Inc. Publishers.

6. Dreze, J. (2003). 'Patterns of literacy and their social context', in Veena Das (Ed.), Oxford India Companion of Sociology and Social Anthropology. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

7. Foley, D. A., Levinson, A. B., & Hurtig, J. (2001). 'Anthropology goes inside: The new educational ethnography of ethnicity and gender', Review of Research in Education, 25, pp. 37-98.

8. Herskovits, M. J. (1955). Cultural Anthropology. New York: Pragun Publications.

9. Khasnabis, R., & Chatterjee, T. (2007). 'Enrolling and retaining slum children in formal schools: A field survey in eastern slums of Kolkata', Economic and Political Weekly, 43(22), pp. 2091-2098.

10. Kluckhohn, C. (1965). Culture and Behavior: Collected Essays. New York: Free Press of Glencoe.

11. Lovibond, P. F., & Lovibond, S. H. (1995a). 'The structure of negative emotional states: Comparison of the Depression Anxiety Stress Scales (DASS) with the Beck depression and anxiety inventories', Behaviour Research and Therapy, 33, pp. 335–343.

12. Lovibond, S. H., & Lovibond, P. F. (1995b). Manual for the depression anxiety stress scales. Sydney: Psychology Foundation.

13. Ogbu, J. (1981). 'School Ethnography: A multilevel approach', Anthropology and Education Quarterly, 12(1), pp. 3-29.

14. Smith, D. M. (1992). 'Anthropology of education and educational research: CAE presidential address', Anthropology and Education Quarterly, 23, pp. 85-198.

15. Spindler, G. (1955). Education and Anthropology. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

16. Spindler, G. (1987). 'Three categories of cultural knowledge useful in doing cultural therapy', Anthropology and Education Quarterly, 30(4), pp. 466-472.

17. Spindler, G. (Ed.). (2000). Anthropology and Education: An Overview in Fifty Years of Anthropology and Education 1950-2000: A Spindler Anthology. New Jersey: LEA.

18. Suarez-Orozco, M. (1991). 'Dialogue and the transmission of culture: The Spindlers and the making of American anthropology', Anthropology and Education Quarterly, 22, pp. 281-291.

19. Sudarshanam, G. (1991). Rural Education: A Study of Universalisation of Education in India. New Delhi: Gian Publishing House.

20. Thapan, M. (2006). Life at School: An Ethnographic Study. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

21. Varenne, H. (2008). 'Culture, Education, Anthropology', Anthropology & Education Quarterly, vol. 39, no. 4, pp. 356–368.

Internet Sources:

22. Browning, R. (1999). 'Education', Encyclopedia Britannica. Available at: https://www.britannica.com/topic/education (Accessed, Nov 2020).

23. Naka, A., Thomas, R. (1999). 'Education', Encyclopedia Britannica. Available at: https://www.britannica.com/topic/education (Accessed, Nov 2020).

24. Gupta, D. (2019). 'What is the Importance of Education in Today's World?', Brilliant Read. Available at: https://www.brilliantread.com/importance-of-education/ (Accessed, Dec 2020).