

ACADEMIC STRESS, ACHIEVEMENT MOTIVATION AND SELF CONCEPT- RELATION TO EDUCATIONAL CHOICE

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Abstract- The present study investigates the educational choice in relation to academic stress, achievement motivation and academic self- concept among the adolescents of the intermediate or plus two stage in their academic career. Random sampling procedure was used to select the sample. One hundred and fifty students studying in the second year colleges of Trichy formed the sample. They were from four educational streams viz., Biology, Mathematics, commerce and humanities. There were 60 boys and 60 girls varying in age from 17 to 19 years. The results revealed that subjects from Biology stream had significantly more academic stress and commerce subjects exhibited low academic stress. In Biology group the interpersonal difficulties were found to be the major source of their academic stress. The medical stream also had a high need to achieve while the commerce grouped showed least achievement motivation. The four educational stream subjects did not vary in academic self- concept. No Significant gender differences were found in academic self –concept in the subjects of four educational streams.

1. INTRODUCTION

The choice of career is one of the most crucial decisions an adolescent makes in his/ her life. A career needs to be chosen with utmost care, thought and planning. The modern world, which is said to be a world of achievements, is also a world of stress. One finds stress everywhere, whether it be within the family, business organization/enterprise or any other social or economic activity. Stress is a subject which is hard to avoid. The term is discussed not only in our conversations but has become enough of a public issue to attract widespread media attention. Stress is defined as burdens, pressures, anxieties and worries. Everyone has had it or has it in one point in their high school life. The importance of the students in the education process is unquestionable. This is because of all the human factors in the educational system, the students occupy the key position and it is only through them that the ultimate process of education takes place. The students today are facing with new challenges in education calling for greater effort from students. In addition there are heavy demands made by the society on students to perform various roles, many of which are undefined, inconsistent and unachievable in the present socio-cultural, economic and bureaucratic contexts of our society, causing heavy stress on students mainly high school students. Unfortunately stress is a common part of life as we begin the new millennium, something few of us can avoid altogether. Partly for this reason and partly for both physical health and psychological well being, stress has become an important topic of research in psychology. Stress exists from the change in an individual's thinking and their lifestyle nowadays. Now, individuals have changed in their perceptions and the way they interpret this life. Students in their teens are the ones who are going through the transitional phase, which is an intermediate of childhood and adulthood. Stress is believed to be caused by the various problems that exist such as problems at school, financial problems, family problems and problems in their surroundings.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

At initial stage of the present study, a collective body of research work, related to involved variables i.e. academic achievement, cognitive styles, personality traits/factors, and adjustment was examined extensively, so that proper guidelines and directions from objectives, hypotheses, methodologies and findings may be sought to assist the various steps of the present study like determination of objectives, formulation of hypotheses, selection of methodology and to get an understanding of relationships between different related variables. Following is the (chronological wise) related literature discussed.

Tung and Chahal (2005) examined relationship between stress and adjustment and found no significant causal relationship between stress and the adjustment. However direction of the results implied that level of adjustment influences the number of stress full events and amount of stress experienced by them.

Rawal (2006) studied personality adjustment and attitude towards authority of emotionally disturbed adolescents in relation to their home and school environment and found that emotionally disturbed students did not differ

significantly as regards their level of adjustment; emotionally disturbed students belonging to various age groups did not vary significantly as regard their personality adjustment; educational status of parents of emotionally disturbed students did not vary significantly with regard to adjustment and attitude towards authority; school environment influenced total adjustment among emotionally disturbed students.

Surekha (2008) studied relationship between students' adjustment and academic achievement and found that boys and girls from private schools were well adjusted and academically performed better than boys and girls from government schools; co-efficient of correlation between students' adjustment and academic achievement was -0.29, which was significant at 0.01 level, which indicates that low scores in adjustment tend to accompany with high scores in academic achievement.

2.1 Summary of review of Literature

Regarding the relationship between academic achievement and adjustment, most of the researches disclosed that home, educational, emotional, health and overall adjustment was positively correlated with academic achievement. Regarding the relationship of social adjustment and academic achievement the findings were inconsistent. Few researches showed the significant influence of gender on academic achievement without any direction and some studies showed significant gender difference regarding emotional adjustment, overall adjustment as indicating that boys showed better adjustment than girls. Regarding cognitive style inconsistent results were found on gender differences. On personality variables, large gender differences were found and a few studies showed no differences for specific personality factors.

3. HYPOTHESES

Based on the review of the previous studies and the personal observations of the investigator, the following hypotheses have been framed,

- The subjects in four stream viz Commerce, Biology, Mathematics and Humanities will differ in academic stress.
- The subjects in four streams will differ in achievement motivation.
- There will be significant relationship between academic stress, achievement motivation.

4. METHOD AND TOOLS

One hundred and fifty students studying in the second year in the Trichy colleges from four educational stream viz., Biology, Mathematics, Commerce and Humanities selected at random sampling comprised the sample. There were 60 boys and 60 girls. They varied in age from 17 years to 19 years. Equal number of students was chosen from each of four streams. seventy percentage of the subjects came from nuclear families while thirty percentage from joint families. Based on the nature of the study standardized research instruments appropriate for the sample were used for the sample.

Table-4.1 Four Educational Streams on Academic Stress

Educational Stream	Level of stress			Total	Mean Score
	Low	Medium	High		
Commerce	10 (16.4%)	45 (73.8%)	6 (9.8%)	61	85.1
Mathematics	5 (10.2%)	30 (61.2%)	14 (28.6%)	49	84.6
Humanities	7 (25%)	16 (57.1%)	5 (17.9%)	28	83.2
Biology	3 (13.6%)	9 (40.9%)	10 (45.5%)	22	84.1
Total	25	100	35	160	

Source: Primary Data

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It has been observed from the above table that the percentage of high level of stress was the highest (45.5%) among the respondents in Biology and the same was the lowest (9.8%) among the students in the stream of commerce. The percentage of medium level of stress was the highest (73.8%) among the respondents in commerce and the same was the lowest (40.9%) among students of Biology. The percentage of low level of stress was the highest (25%) among the respondents in humanities and the same was the lowest (10.2%) among the mathematics.

Table-4.2 Four Educational Streams and Academic Stress of the Respondents

Factor	Calculated χ^2 Value	Table Value	D.F	Remarks
Educational Stream	17.657	15.507	8	Significant at 5% level

It is clear from the above table that the calculated chi-square value is greater than the table value and the result is significant at 5% level. Hence, the hypothesis “Stream of the respondents and academic stress of the respondents are not associated”, does not hold good. From the analysis, it is concluded that there is a close relationship between the Stream of the respondents and academic stress.

Table-4.3 Gender Difference on Achievement Motivation in Four Educational Streams

Educational stream	Boys			Girls		
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
Commerce	15	162.62	22.94	15	170.47	16.40
Mathematics	15	165.09	16.96	15	173.89	24.98
Humanities	15	161.82	30.04	15	158.76	31.27
Biology	15	161.13	22.65	15	167.32	16.76
Total	60	162.66	25.25	60	167.61	14.54

4.1 Achievement Motivation and Gender

There were no significant gender differences on achievement motivation seen in subjects of the four educational streams.

4.2 Academic Self Concept and Gender

Both boys and girls in the total sample showed normal positive academic self –concept but there were statistically insignificant gender differences on academic self- concept observed both in terms of educational streams and in the entire sample.

CONCLUSIONS

From the result of the study, the following inferences were drawn

There were no significant variations in the four educational groups on academic self- concept. The commerce group showed highest academic stress. In the Biology group, interpersonal difficulties were the major source of academic stress. The Biology group exhibited high achievement motivation while commerce and humanities group exhibited low need to achieve.

Implications of the study

The adolescents of the professional streams Biology and mathematical are the cream of the academic world. But their performance is likely to be reduced due to high level of stress. So to enhance their potential and improve their performance they should be counseled and through intervention programs properly equipped with effective coping strategies to deal with stress.

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