

EFFECT OF LIFESTYLE FACTORS ON ACADEMIC STRESS AMONG HIGHER SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS OF KERALA

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ABSTRACT

There is a rapid change in our technology and in our society. The effect of these changes seem to be the greatest on those people who can comprehend most and yet are most immature, which is adolescents. The first way of looking at adolescent's problems is to see how they are put under stress in their academic life. Academic Stress causes much severe side effects. The adolescent is supposed to be occupied with activities that will prepare him for adulthood. This can be considered a wellness Life Style. This paper makes an attempt to find out the effect of life style factors on academic stress. ANOVA Scheffe's test of multiple comparison and mean difference analysis were the statistical techniques used for the analysis. The result revealed that there exists significant effect of lifestyle factors on academic stress of higher secondary school students of Kerala.

INTRODUCTION

The challenges of the contemporary world can be met only if we develop a progressive and comprehensive educational system. Education is the spring board that decides our future. Throughout the whole process of education, teachers must be concerned to see that their pupils gradually form sound standards of work and conduct, that they come to have a regard for good moral and aesthetic values, and that they come to acquire a fine sense of judgment in matters which are written within their comprehension. However ambitious these goals may seem, teachers must surely consider their efforts worth- while, for pupils who come to have genuine pride in their work and proper humility in success are the rewards.

The adolescent is vulnerable to any increase or shift in either internal or external pressures. It is a stage when they face a lot of problems and pressures. Effective guidance through proper education could only impart that courage to face these problems and find remedies. Later the vital and crucial question arose "whether today's education is sufficient to lead our adolescents in the right path"? Education should be a leading light for the learners who are grouping in darkness. In spite of facing the challenges of life our new generation is trying to skip from their problems through various ways. Solutions used by these

adolescents to cope with their problems were physical aggression, rebellion, withdrawal (distinct lack of affect), physical separation from the problem (retiring to one's room, running away from home), or internalization (psycho-somatic illness). In spite of these our country is passing through a serious and shocking issue that is, suicidal attempt by teenagers. Suicidal attempt is usually assumed to indicate some serious degree of depression. Farnsworth (1989) noted that most suicidal attempts are impulsive, precipitous acts, and although the intentions do not always appear to be serious, they should be considered as serious threats.

Increase in the number of suicide from the last ten years in our state, especially in adolescents, prompts us to analyze the emotional stability of our future assets. Adolescence is a period of heightened emotionality. It is always fluctuating. Any fault in dealing with their emotional aspect may create tragic ends.

The enigma of the adolescent lies in his inner life, which is relatively in accessible to an outsider, but which requires understanding by those who work with him professionally that is, the teachers. The inner life is all of the mental structure, activity and functioning of the individual, and includes such phenomena as conflicts, defenses, thoughts, memories, feelings, fanatics, dreams, conscience, and drive

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tension. Focusing on the inner life as a distinct part of the adolescent, it permits teachers to approach him as a distinct entity having a mind of his own. The burning question "Who am I"? Is ever present in the human being, but assumes central importance in the mind of the adolescent. Empathetic approach and whole hearted devotion from the teachers along with best suited curriculum could surely pave way for the mental, emotional and intellectual wellness of adolescents. A teacher should be an important and useful person to the adolescent, who can assist him in his task there by reducing his mental strain. Education should be best valued in helping the average adolescent with his garden variety of problems, and it can form a foundation for more aspiring future.

NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

There is a rapid change in our society and technology and a huge increase in what it is that we have to learn. The effect of these rapid changes seems to be the greatest on those people who can comprehend most and yet are most immature, that is adolescents. Although certainly the effects of rapid change would be apparent throughout the life cycle, the effects are probably not the same on all age groups. Most young people struggle along through puberty, high school, and college to arrive with a few ups and downs. The same forces have contributed to the characteristic forms of adolescent distress, anomic, loneliness and existential despair.

By analyzing each and every aspect of the period of adolescence, it is clear that our young generation is put under pressure one or the other way. Identity formation "meets its crises in adolescence" (Erickson, 1963). A period of disorganization and reorganization in society has an especially severe impact since they are still in the process of defining life style and vocational goals. Vastly changing needs for traditional vocations and worsening economic conditions have seriously eroded options for study and training. The first way of looking at adolescent's problems therefore is to see how the individual is put under stress and how his adaptive capacities are able to cope with the various challenges.

Sometimes the main difficulties are experienced as being situated at home with in the nuclear family, sometimes at school, college or university etc.

There is no single effect of stress. The same stressful event can have many meanings to different people. But we can say that if stresses impinge on an immature organism- stresses can lead to untoward changes in that vulnerable organism. Academic stress is becoming increasingly common and widespread among adolescents. The physical and psychological effects of academic stress are more serious in nature (Raina, 1983). Academic stress can directly or indirectly affect almost all, if not all, the organ systems of the body. Another aspect of academic stress is that can disrupt performance and at the extreme level Academic stress can apparently induce a psychological state requiring clinical intervention. The effects of stress may remain long after the particular stressor has disappeared. There is evidence that after undergoing a stressful experience; people are less able to perform optimally in a variety of tasks.

It is clear from the explanation that academic stress causes much severe side effects both physiologically and psychologically. It may result in a definitive illness, or even there may be a reduction in achievement of the adolescents. So it is highly essential to find out the causes and reduce the intensity of academic stress among adolescents for their good will and bright future. There is no doubt about the fact that academic stress do not grow in vacuum and stress in adolescents cannot be investigated without understanding the most intricate and intimate social fabric of family and parents in particular. Adolescents' growth does not occur in vacuum. It is profoundly influenced by psychosocial, cultural and historical processes. As our society become increasingly anomic and fragmented, there is a corresponding weakening of family cohesiveness, loss of authority and shared value systems, and the rise of alternative life-styles exemplified by cults and communes.

The phenomena, processes and goals of adolescents are often profoundly related to emotional illness. This has a significant influence

upon life-style. The adolescent is supposed to be occupied with activities that will prepare him for adulthood. This can hardly be considered a life-style since goals and values are vague. Frequently youth fails to construct a framework, which will enable him to live comfortably and feel valued and useful, and then they are faced with stress at the extreme.

Adolescence is an opportunity to find new solutions to past developmental delays or arrests and to emerge a more effective and less conflict person. It is the duty of teachers to provide opportunities for successful learning and work experiences which could produce dramatic developmental shifts in every area of adolescent development and thereby reducing the risk of academic stress. A failure here can create a state of intractable illness which becomes unresponsive to treatment. Seriously disturbed adolescents due to stress require specific interventions and cannot be left for the possibility of self-righting mechanisms to occur.

On reviewing the literature the investigator understood that no studies were conducted to know the Effect of Life Style factors on Academic Stress and being a teacher, the investigator decided to conduct the study for the welfare of the adolescents in our country. After a thorough, careful and critical analysis of the causes of Academic Stress the investigator decided to study the Effect of Life Style factors on Academic Stress of Higher Secondary School students.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM EFFECT OF LIFE STYLE FACTORS ON ACADEMIC STRESS ON HIGHER SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS OF KERALA

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following are the objectives of the study:

1. To find out whether there is any significant difference in the mean scores of Life Style factors of Higher Secondary School students for the Total sample and sub samples based on Locale, Gender and Type of Management.
2. To find out whether there is any significant difference in the mean scores of Academic

Stress of Higher Secondary School students for Total sample and subsamples based on Locale, Gender and Type of Management.

3. To find out the Effect of Life Style factors on Academic stress in Higher Secondary School students for the Total sample.

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

The hypotheses framed and tested for the present study are:

1. There will be significant difference in the mean scores of the Life Style factors of Higher Secondary School students of the total score of sub samples based on Locale, Gender and Type of Management.
2. There will be significant difference in the mean scores of the Academic Stress of Higher Secondary School students of the total score of sub samples based on Locale, Gender and Type of Management.
3. The effect of Life Style factors on Academic stress of Higher Secondary School students for the Total sample.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology used for the present study is:

SAMPLE

The present study was carried out on the representative sample of 520 students of class XIth from the Higher Secondary Schools of Malappuram, Thrissur and Kozhikode districts of Kerala State. The sample was drawn by proportionate stratified random sampling method giving due representation of factors like (i) Locale of the school (ii) Gender of the students and (iii) Type of Management of the school. The Girls-Boys ratio is taken as 1:1. Type of Management includes Aided and Government Higher Secondary Schools in the ratio 2:1. Urban and Rural locales are selected for collecting data.

TOOL

For the present study the tools employed are the following:

1. Life Style Inventory (Meera & Noora, 2010)
2. Academic Stress Inventory (Meera & Noora, 2010)

STATISTICAL TECHNIQUE

The following statistical techniques were used for the analysis of data in the present study:

1. Test of significance of difference between means of large independent sample.
2. One-way ANOVA (Best & Khan, 1996)
3. Scheffe's Test Of Multiple Comparison (Ferguson, 1996)

**ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION
COMPARISON OF MEAN SCORES OF LIFE
STYLE FACTORS OF HIGHER SECONDARY
SCHOOL STUDENTS BETWEEN SUB
SAMPLES BASED ON LOCALE OF
SCHOOLS GENDER AND TYPE OF
MANAGEMENT**

Investigates whether there is any significant difference exists in the mean scores of Life Style factors for the sub samples Rural and Urban, Boy and Girl and Aided and Government. The computed critical ratios are listed in a tabular form in the Table 1

**TABLE 1
Data and Result of Mean scores of
Life Style Factors of Higher Secondary
School Students for the sub samples Urban
and Rural, Boys and Girls and Aided and
Government**

SL. No.	Nature of sample	Sub sample	No. of sample	Mean	SD	Critical Ratio
1.	Locale	Rural	N ₁ 265	\bar{X}_1 42.37	σ_1 8.29	3.94
		Urban	N ₂ 265	\bar{X}_2 39.65	σ_2 7.98	
2.	Gender	Boys	N ₁ 261	\bar{X}_1 43.49	σ_1 5.71	8.72
		Girls	N ₂ 269	\bar{X}_2 37.84	σ_2 9.12	
3.	Type of Management	Aided	N ₁ 338	\bar{X}_1 43.15	σ_1 7.93	3.13
		Government	N ₂ 192	\bar{X}_2 40.83	σ_2 8.50	

When the mean scores of the Life Style factors of Higher Secondary School Students; based on Locale, Gender and Type of management were compared, the critical ratio obtained were 3.94, 8.72 and 3.13 respectively. The Gender of the sample shows significant difference in the mean scores. There is significant difference in the mean scores of Life Style factors based on Type

of management and Locale of the institutions too. Since the values 3.94, 8.72 and 3.13 are greater than the table values, they are significant at 0.01 level. From the table values we could also assume that the difference in the mean scores is highly significant for the Gender of the sample as the value obtained is far greater than the table value of 8.72.

The above results reveal that the Life Style factors of Higher Secondary School Students are influenced significantly by the Locale of the institutions, Gender of the sample and Type of management of the schools.

**COMPARISON OF MEAN SCORES OF
ACADEMIC STRESS OF HIGHER
SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS
BETWEEN SUB SAMPLES BASED ON
LOCALE OF THE SCHOOLS, GENDER AND
TYPE OF MANAGEMENT**

To investigate whether there is any significant difference exists between the mean scores of Academic Stress in Higher Secondary School Students for the sub samples Rural and Urban, Boys and Girls, Aided and Government. The computed critical ratio is listed in a tabular form in the Table 2

**TABLE 2
Data and Result of Mean scores of
Academic Stress of Higher Secondary
School Students for the sub samples-Urban
and Rural, Boys and Girls and Aided and
Government**

SL. No.	Nature of sample	Sub sample	No. of sample	Mean	SD	Critical Ratio
1.	Locale	Rural	N ₁ 265	\bar{X}_1 36.10	σ_1 7.034	6.06
		Urban	N ₂ 265	\bar{X}_2 38.04	σ_2 7.13	
2.	Gender	Boys	N ₁ 261	\bar{X}_1 34.92	σ_1 7.77	3.95
		Girls	N ₂ 269	\bar{X}_2 37.33	σ_2 6.37	
3.	Type of Management	Aided	N ₁ 338	\bar{X}_1 38.23	σ_1 6.38	3.49
		Government	N ₂ 192	\bar{X}_2 35.86	σ_2 8.21	

When the mean scores of Academic Stress of Higher Secondary School Students between sub samples based on Locale, Gender and Type of Management were compared, the critical ratio obtained were 6.06, 3.95 and 3.49 respectively. Since these values 6.06, 3.95 and 3.49 are greater than the table values, they are significant at 0.01 level. There exist significant difference in the mean scores of Academic Stress based on Locale, Gender and Type of management. It is also revealed from the Table that the difference in the mean scores of the Rural and Urban sub samples are highly significant when compared to the difference in the mean scores of the other two sub samples based on Gender and Type of management, since the critical ratio obtained is 6.06, which is far greater than 3.95 and 3.49.

INVESTIGATION OF THE EFFECT OF LIFE STYLE FACTORS ON ACADEMIC STRESS OF HIGHER SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

Data and result of the Effect of Life Style factors on Academic Stress for Total sample is given in Table 3.

TABLE 3
Summary of one-way ANOVA of Academic Stress of Higher Secondary School students and Life Style factors for the Total sample (N=530)

Source of variation	Sum of squares	Degrees of freedom	Mean square of variation	F-value	Level of significance
Between group	4463.415	2	2231.70	51.74	0.01
Within group	20487.02	527	44.13		
Total	24950.44	529			

Table 4.5 indicate that 'F' value for Between groups and Within groups of the Life Style factors on Academic Stress is 51.74, which is greater than the table value for corresponding degrees of freedom at 0.01 level. The F-value for 2df (2,527) is 4.65.

This implies that Life Style factors have significant effect on the Academic Stress in Higher Secondary School Students. It is helpful to teachers to direct the learners towards a healthy Life Style and thereby reducing the risk of academic stress among adolescence which may in turn improve their performance and

excellence. From the result of the study, it is quite obvious that life style factors have a significant and crucial place in determining the academic success, physical wellness and psychological wellbeing of an individual. So, due importance should be given to develop a healthy life style for producing stress free youngsters.

POST-HOC ANALYSIS MULTIPLE COMPARISONS

Data and results obtained for mean scores of Academic Stress of Higher Secondary School Students based on Life Style factors is presented in Table 4.

TABLE 4
Scheffe's Test of Multiple Comparisons Between Means of Academic Stress of Higher Secondary School Students for Total sample based on three groups of Life Style factors

Sample	Group compared	Mean		F	Value of F'		Level of significance
		M ₁	M ₂		0.05	0.01	
Total 530	L.H.L.S.G-A.H.L.S.G	28.81	37.56	30.02	3.86	9.24	0.01
	L.H.L.S.G-H.H.L.S.G	28.81	37.32	49.84	3.86	9.24	0.01
	A.H.L.S.G-H.H.L.S.G	37.56	37.32	0.036	3.86	9.24	NS

Interpretation of Scheffe's Table of multiple comparisons for Total sample

As per the table the 'F' ratio obtained for the groups of L.H.L.S.G- A.H.L.S.G, L.H.L.S.G-H.H.L.S.G, A.H.L.S.G-H.H.L.S.G on Academic Stress for the total sample are 30.02, 49.84 and 0.036 respectively. There is no significant difference existing in the groups of A.H.L.S.G H.H.L.S.G, because the corresponding F value is less than the table value of (2,527) degrees of freedom.

But in the groups of L.H.L.S.G-H.H.L.S.G the F value is 49.84. The obtained F value is greater than F' value (6.69) required for the significance at 0.01 level for (2,527) degrees of freedom. Hence significant difference exists at 0.01 level between groups L.H.L.S.G H.H.L.S.G with regard to their Academic Stress.

For the L.H.L.S.G A.H.L.S.G, the F value obtained is 30.02 which is greater than F' value (6.82) required for significance at 0.01 level

for (2,527) degrees of freedom. Hence significant difference at 0.01 level exists between groups of L.H.L.S.G A.H.L.S.G with regard to their Academic Stress.

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

We have changed more slowly our life style and borrowed stress, strain and diseases. Relationships are strained; families break up more quickly and more often in this twenty first century. None other than the teacher could easily understand the intellectual developments and emotional fluctuations of the learner. The work of the teacher is presently demanding specialized professional preparation as she has to take variety of roles and that too with a different style of action. The classroom environment of the learner could directly and indirectly influence him providing as source of vital energy. It should be free and democratic along with an empathetic teacher. Learning experiences should be interesting and challenging. Tasks should be selected based on the age level and unique qualities of the learner and motivating them to enhance length and quality of life is the duty of education. The knowledge of how to maintain a healthy life style is carried away by the learners to their world outside. Through proper guidance a teacher could impart the knowledge that there is not one but a lot of solutions for a single problem. Problems in the classroom should be approached with a positive outlook.

Our tradition asks us to love our fellow beings not to wipe out them from the universe. Love, cooperation and sympathy could be imparted in the classroom by various group activities, conducting cultural programs and other curricular activities through an integrated approach. Even the modest amounts of physical activity add to wellbeing and life expectancy. The importance of being physically well should be imparted to the learners along with giving provisions for physical activities in the school. Life style factors have a significant and crucial place in determining the academic success, physical wellness and psychological wellbeing of an individual. So, due importance should be given to develop a healthy life style for producing stress free youngsters.

CONCLUSION

We live in the best of times and the worst of times. Through technology, we are able to leave behind most of the struggles of daily existence; that in the past burdened human kind. We are gifted with options. We are not bound by space, by the vagaries of climate; or by the rampages of pestilence. We have no apparent limits to what we can discover and do. Yet, technology has brought unintended traps too much change in too short a time an ever faster pace of daily life, a never-ending quest for material good, loss of anchorages, uprooted ness, transience, isolation, and neglect of our bodies. We have changed more slowly our life style and borrowed stress and strain, distress and diseases. Relationships are strained; families break up more quickly and more often in this 21st century. The profession of a teacher is not as simple as anyone can do. Students in front of them are the buds of today. They could either be bloomed for tomorrow or destroyed in the earlier stage itself. Both could be done by a single teacher. Present education system should lay emphasis on our inherited customs, traditions and uphold the cultural heritage of our country. Knowledge about values and thoughts should be delivered by the teachers through an integrated approach so that they are able to develop a healthy life style. It is the duty of teachers to help the learners maintain healthy relationships among the students. If a student is intellectually, emotionally and physically fit, he could lead a stress free life and success will follow him.

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