Pakistan Languages and Humanities Review
www.plhr.org.pk

RESEARCH PAPER

Parental Anxiety and Students' Academic Stress at Secondary School Level: A Correlation Study

Irsa Tayyab[1] Dr. Nazish Andleeb[2] Moneeza Aslam [3]

1. M. Phil Scholar, department of Education, University of Gujrat, Punjab, Pakistan
2. Lecturer, department of Education, University of Gujrat, Punjab, Pakistan
3. M. Phil Scholar, department of Education, University of Gujrat, Punjab, Pakistan

| *Corresponding Author | irsatayyab019@gmail.com |

ABSTRACT

This quantitative study was planned to find relationship between parental anxiety and students' academic stress at secondary level. Population was 9th grade students of Government High Schools of Tehsil Gujrat. Two stages disproportionate stratified random sampling technique was used to select 400 students. Two instruments consisted of 10 items each; 1) parental anxiety scale, 2) students' academic stress scale on five points Likert scale were developed and validated. Content Validity Index and cronbach alpha of both the scales were found satisfactory. Percentage, mean, standard deviation, and Pearson correlation were used to analyze the data. Results of parental anxiety scale revealed that most of the parents feel anxiety about their children's homework, preparation of examination, mental health, academic achievement, curricular and co-curricular activities, learning environment, social behavior, ethical values and food of the children. Moreover, students' stress affects their academic achievement, learning process, cognitive skills, and communication between the teachers and students. Furthermore, significant relationship was found between parental anxiety and academic stress of the students for the academic achievement.

| KEYWORDS | Future Failure, Parental Anxiety, Physical Health, Social Pressure, Students' Academic Stress |

Introduction

Learning is a basic element of education (Hafeez et al., 2020) and it is an admissible fact that learner's academic achievement plays a fundamental role in the progress and growth of a country (Parker et al., 2014). By knowing the importance of academic achievement, every nation effort to improve and make it efficient (Elias et al., 2011). Actually, academic achievement is the outcomes of the learning. Academic achievement refers the extent to which the learners gain knowledge, proficiencies and skills that the teacher pursues to assign or teach (Salami, 2010). Researchers (Alfadda et al., 2015) conducted the study on the academic stress and academic achievement and indicated that academic achievement based on some particular psychological factors such as motivation, depression, emotional intelligence, anxiety and stress.

Putwain (2009) stated that parental stress is a main factor affecting test anxiety associated with socio-economic environment of students. When students think that their parents emphasize admission criteria based on performance tests and other assessments rather than effort, they see their parents as a source of stress. Therefore, it is not surprising that perceived parental stress is related to poor academic and social adaptability and increased test anxiety.

There are many factors that cause depression and stress, such as cognition, social isolation, and lack of support from peers, loneliness, and destructive thoughts. If the parents ignore from all that factors then the learners may be affected with serious mental disorders (Langrock et al., 2002).

There are four basic areas before the exam that can cause anxiety and stress. The first reason is lifestyle, including malnutrition, insufficient rest, and lack of effective planning for available time. If students use the available time correctly, they will not be able to complete the course content on time, leading to academic stress and anxiety. So, by managing the time, one can cope with the academic stress and anxiety (Verma et al., 2002). The second key thing to avoid the academic stress and anxiety before the examination is to collect the important information about the examination dates, course outlines to be covered, venue of examination and paper essential to sit in examination hall. Lack of any information mentioned above can create academic stress and anxiety before the starting of the examination. The style of studying of learners such as all-night studying before the examination, attempting to memorize the content of textbooks, not making revision notes and inefficient and inconsistent content coverage may also lead to the academic stress and anxiety. In addition to these factors, there are also some other psychological and physical causes that may also lead to the academic stress and anxiety before the examination (Walker et al., 2003).

Literature Review

Putnam (2012) in a study defined the stress and anxiety a complex social and psychological situation that disturbs different psychological, behavioral and cognitive states. Anxiety and stress can be distributed into four types namely an emotional condition, state, trait and situation specific (Tohill & Holyoak, 2000). Academic stress or academic anxiety is a specific anxiety state related to educational activities and the environment. Academic stress involves not only examination stress but also stress about some educational subjects. For example, some students feel anxiety in math and some in English languages etc. (Cassady, 2010). Therefore, academic anxiety or academic stress is a kind of academic anxiety, which is combined with the background of the school environment and the imminent danger of teachers, co-curricular courses and certain subjects. Academic stress or academic anxiety is a type of psychological disorder that is disturbed by the school situation, showing obvious negativity. Students feel anxious during academic activities, manifesting as helplessness, high blood pressure, panic, and confusion. Academic anxiety or academic stress leads to academic challenges through reduced concentration, focus and attention and insignificant thoughts (Eysenck, 2009).

Emotion, learning skills deficits, homework intervention, and worry are the four main components of academic anxiety. A rapid pulse, nausea, sweaty palms, and tight muscles are all biochemical indicators of emotion. Inadequate learning strategies that cause fear cause study abilities deficits. Homework-driven interventions are the result of inefficient habits that hinder academic success, such as spending too much time on questions you cannot answer. Worrying will divert students' attention to success, thereby inhibiting academic performance (Foa et al., 2005).

Academic anxiety is not a bad thing at all. Academic anxiety is a common problem that students must address if they are to succeed academically. Real, high levels of anxiety impair focus and memory, all of which are essential for daily academic achievement and achievement, However, without anxiety, the majority of us will lack the energy and passion to prepare for tests, do regular homework, or write research papers (Zvolensky et al., 2002).

Moderate academic anxiety provides learners with the support they need to put forward effort in finishing graded schoolwork and studying for exams (Stöber, 2004).

There are a variety of reasons that put pressure on students to do well in both curricular and co-curricular environments, increasing their academic anxiety. The extent to which an individual recognizes his parents as enabling or even forcing him to achieve a high standard of scholastic achievement is one aspect that has received a lot of attention (Keogh & French, 2001). Parental pressure varies with different cultures and national traditions. A culture that focuses on personal exaltation, familial virtue, and obedience can lead to great pressure of parents. Except for Riley's (2003) unpublished study that collected demographic data on adolescents and their parents in Beijing, China, few studies have explored the valuable factors that determine the degree of parental stress in the same culture. These demographic variables include the gender of the adolescent, the gender of the parents, the education and income level of the parents, the occupation of the parents, the age of the adolescent, the adolescent's high school performance, the academic performance of the adolescent, and the type of adolescent. Schools and teenagers' desire for college education. However, it did not examine the relevance of parental education, occupation and income level statistics to parental stress and further research is recommended. Since parents' level of their education, profession and returns level can be included in the class of parents' socioeconomic status.

For children and adults, life is full of challenges. Everyone faces pressure in their own way. Stress is a natural event that people experience in life. According to the American Institute of Stress, this situation or feeling occurs when a person believes that their needs exceed the personal and social resources they can mobilize. Stress can be defined as any external or internal factors that make it difficult for people to adapt to the environment and make individuals strive to maintain a balance between themselves and the external environment (Aihie & Ohanaka, 2019). Stress is a state of mental or emotional tension or suspense, which affects the stages of development of people (Banerjee et al., 2012).

Maajida Aafreen et al., (2018) stated in a study that academic stress plays a significant role in the development of mental health and related issues. At present, about 40% children in the world have mental health related problems (Ghatol, 2017). Pizzie & Kraemer (2019) stated in a study that parent's anxiety is one of the most communal ailments recorded in the schooling children and youngsters. Stankovska et al., (2018) directed in a study that academic stress may have various levels depends on one's responses to a particular situation. Academic stress is stated as behavioral, negative and physiological procedure that happens when a person attempts to compromise with stressors (Sandal et al., 2017). Malach-Pines & Keinan, (2007) defined academic stress as the awareness of strangeness between stressors and person's capabilities to attain requirements.

Stress is considered an unpleasant state of emotional and physical arousal. Jia & Loa (2018) reported that first-year students showed greater academic pressure than other students. This may be because they are not familiar with the school environment to which they must adapt. Therefore, when they go to inaugurate new societal relations while struggling to cope with increasing academic requirements, they may feel segregation, anxiety, depression, and even loss of direction. Although some researchers have found that women report greater academic pressure than men (Ebrahim, 2016), other researchers report that men have greater academic pressure (Gonmei & Devendiran, 2017). In other studies (Prabu, 2015; Yikaelo et al., 2018), it was found that gender did not have a significant effect on the level of expression of academic pressure. Regarding the impact of study courses on the level of academic stress performance (Kauts, 2016), it is found that science majors are under greater pressure than humanities and business majors. On the other hand,

Reddy et al., (2018) found in a study of undergraduate students of multiple genders that business students have the highest academic pressure and humanities students the lowest. Individuals experience situations that they believe are dangerous or threatening to their well-being. However, stress is perceived in different ways and can mean different things to different people. It is considered an event or situation that causes people to feel nervous, stressed, or negative emotions including anxiety and anger (Kalaivani et al., 2018).

Material and Methods

Research Design

A quantitative correlational study was conducted to assess the relationship between parental anxiety and academic stress at secondary level. There are two variables under investigation in the study. The first variable was parental anxiety and was considered as predictor variable while other variable was students' academic stress and taken as a criterion variable. Research design is elaborated through the following figure.
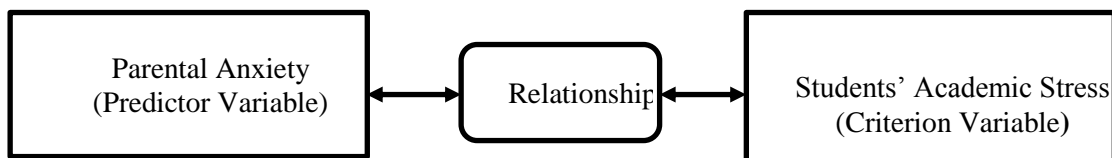
Parental Anxiety (Predictor Variable) ↔ Relationship ↔ Students' Academic Stress (Criterion Variable)

Figure 1 Research Design of the Study

Population

The population of the study was consisted of all 9 grade students studying at public high schools in tehsil Gujrat. Number of total schools in tehsil Gujrat were 183 including 89 boys and 94 girls schools. The students enrolled in grade 9 session 2021-2022 were the population of the study.

Sampling

Sample was selected through disproportionate stratified random sampling technique. There are two strata in the population i.e., boys and girls schools. Among each strata 10 schools were randomly selected. There were total 1062 students enrolled in class 9 including 458 boys and 604 girls. Twenty students from each school was taken as sample. So, the total sample was 400 students in which 200 were boys with same number of girls. Moreover, respective parents of the selected students were also taken as sample for the study.

Instrumentation

Two instruments were developed on five points Likert scale as research tools for the data collection. First instrument was developed to measure parental anxiety and the other was developed for students to measure their academic stress. To make the instruments valid, fourteen experts from Education and Psychology were requested to provide their valuable suggestions on the instruments. Moreover, reliability of both the instruments were ensured through pilot testing. Content validity index (CVI) and Cronbach alpha are presented in the following table.

Table 1
Content Validity Index and Cronbach Alpha of the Instruments

Sr. No.	Scale	No. of Items	Mean	S.D.	CVI	Cronbach Alpha
1	Parental anxiety scale	10	3.21	0.79	0.60	0.92
2	Students' academic stress scale	10	3.41	0.71	0.62	0.90

According to the standards established by Shultz and Whitney (2005), both the values of CVI and Cronbach alpha are acceptable.

Data Analysis

The data was collected through personal visits of class rooms. Students were directed to fill the academic stress scale and return it back. Moreover, parental anxiety scale was filled by delivering it to the parents of respective students and was received back up to three days. Instructions were given by both ways, verbally and in writing. To answer first two research questions, equal intervals of the scores were made and results were interpreted in the light of the criteria presented in table 2 and 4. Moreover, correlation between parental anxiety and students' academic stress were investigated through Pearson correlation.

Results and Discussion

Table 2
Level of Parental Anxiety

Scores Ranges	Description	Mean	Parents' Scores (Percentage)
56-75	High level	4.00	187 (46.75)
35-55	Moderate level	3.30	202 (50.5)
15-34	Low level	2.16	11 (2.75)

Table 2 indicated that majority of the 50.5% parents with mean score 3.30 showed moderate level of anxiety while 46.5% parents with mean score 4.00 showed high level of anxiety, whereas only 2.75% parents with mean score 2.16 showed low level of anxiety. It was concluded that majority of parents have moderate level of anxiety followed by high level. Moreover, factor wise analysis of parental anxiety is displayed in the following table.

Table 3
Factor wise Analysis of Parental Anxiety

Factors	N	Mean	S.D.	Level of Anxiety
Anxiety about Future Failure	400	3.67	0.82	High
Anxiety about Future Social Pressure	400	3.74	0.76	High
Anxiety about Sub-standard Performance among peer group	400	3.80	0.78	High
Anxiety about Physical health	400	3.17	0.86	Moderate
Anxiety about Board Exams	400	3.65	0.63	High
Overall Anxiety	400	3.58	0.53	High

Table 3 describes that parents showed high level of anxiety about their children's future failure (M = 3.67, S.D. = 0.82), future social pressure (M = 3.74, S.D. = 0.76), sub-standard performance among peer group (M = 3.80, S.D. = 0.78) and board exams (M = 3.65, S.D. = 0.63) whereas parents remained moderate while responding their anxiety about physical health of their children (M = 3.17, S.D. = 0.86). Moreover, overall anxiety level of the parents was found high (M = 3.58, S.D. = 0.53).

Table 4
Level of Academic Stress among Students

Scores Ranges	Description	Mean	Student's Scores (Percentage)
38-51	High level	2.00	239 (59.75)
24-37	Moderate level	3.17	147 (36.75)
10-23	Low level	4.17	14 (3.5)

Table 4 described that (59.7%) students with mean score 2.00 have high level of academic stress while 36.75% students with mean score 3.17 have moderate level of academic stress. Whereas, only 14% students with mean score 4.17 have low level of academic anxiety. It was concluded that majority of the students came across high level of academic stress. Overall analysis of students' academic stress revealed that students showed high level of academic stress with mean score 3.77 and S.D. 0.66.

Table 5
Relationship between Parental Anxiety and Students' Academic Stress

	Students' Academic Stress	
Factors	Pearson *r*	P
Anxiety about Future Failure	0.34	0.00*
Anxiety about Future Social Pressure	0.37	0.00*
Anxiety about Sub-standard Performance among peer group	0.33	0.00*
Anxiety about Physical health	-0.03	0.57
Anxiety about Board Exams	0.10	0.04*
Overall scale	0.33	0.00*

N = 400, *Significant at 0.05

Table 5 showed that there is relationship between each factor of parental anxiety and students' academic stress. It was found that there was significant positive moderate relationship between students' academic stress and the factors of parental anxiety like future failure (r = 0.34, p = 0.00 < .05), future social pressure (r = 0.37, p = 0.00 < .05), sub-standard performance among peer group (r = 0.33, p = 0.00 < .05). Moreover, positive weak but significant relationship was observed between students' academic stress and board exams (r = 0.10, p = 0.00 < .05). Furthermore, insignificant negative correlation was observed between students' academic stress and anxiety about physical health (r = -0.03, p = 0.57 > 0.05) and the magnitude of this relationship was found negligibly small. Additionally, a significant positive and moderate correlation was observed between overall parental anxiety and students' academic stress (r = 0.33, p = 0.00 < .05).

Discussion

Education is long-term investment in Pakistan. Parents are the major stakeholders of their children. They spent huge money on their children's education for their bright future. They have great concern with their children's future. Resultantly, they feel stress and anxiety for the education of their children. Eysenck (2009) reported that when parents think about the future of their children, they anxiety level increase to its maximum. This study also proved that the parental anxiety is high in majority of the parents. Results of the study proved that the parental anxiety and academic stress affect the students' academic achievement. These findings are in lined with Rayle & Chung (2007). They have conducted a research to find out the effect of parental anxiety and academic stress on the students' academic achievement at secondary level. They have concluded that the parents, who feel anxiety about their school going kids, perform well most the times but at the same time their kids feel stress and academically suffer. The study concluded parental anxiety has a

significant positive correlation with academic stress among students. These finding are quite in contrast with Jeong et al. (2019).

Recommendations

Parent teacher meetings on the performance of the students may be helpful in decreasing the level of anxiety among the students. Moreover, progress of the students may regularly be reported to the parents so that their anxiety level may be controlled. Moreover, teachers may apply different techniques using their experiences to eliminate students' stress for their better performance. Teachers, students, and the parents may be aware of their anxiety and stress level to cope with them through adopting precautionary measures. There may be a strong bond between teachers and the parents minimize the academic stress of the students and to advance their performance. Moreover, continuous feedback may be given to the parents by using print or soft information sources, and a close and trustworthy relationship among parents, teachers and students may be developed.

References

Aihie, O. N., & Ohanaka, B. I. (2019). Perceived academic stress among undergraduate students in a Nigerian University. *Journal of Educational and Social Research*, 9(2), 56.

Alfadda, S. A., Al-Fallaj, H. A., Al-Banyan, H. A., & Al-Kadhi, R. M. (2015). A clinical investigation of the relationship between the quality of conventional complete dentures and the patients' quality of life. *The Saudi dental journal*, 27(2), 93-98.

Banerjee, P., Chatterjee, P., & Sinha, J. (2012). Is it light or dark? Recalling moral behavior changes perception of brightness. *Psychological Science*, 23(4), 407-409.

Cassady, J. C. (2010). Test anxiety: Contemporary theories and implications for learning. *Anxiety in schools: The causes, consequences, and solutions for academic anxieties*, 2, 7-26.

Ebrahim, M. (2016). Perceived Academic Stress and its Association with Student Characteristics. *Journal of Applied Medical Sciences*, 5(4), 1-15.

Elias, H., Ping, W. S., & Abdullah, M. C. (2011). Stress and academic achievement among undergraduate students in University Putra Malaysia. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 29, 646-655.

Eysenck, W. (2009). Personality, intelligence, and longevity: A cross-cultural perspective. *Social Behavior and Personality: an international journal, 37*(2), 149-154.

Foa, E. B., Hembree, E. A., Cahill, S. P., Rauch, S. A., Riggs, D. S., Feeny, N. C., & Yadin, E. (2005). Randomized trial of prolonged exposure for posttraumatic stress disorder with and without cognitive restructuring: outcome at academic and community clinics. *Journal of consulting and clinical psychology*, 73(5), 953.

Ghatol, S. D. (2017). Academic stress among higher secondary school students: a review. *International Journal of Advanced Research in Education & Technology (IJARET), 4*(1), 38-41.

Gonmei, J., & Devendiran, C. (2017). Perceived stress and psychosocial factors of stress among youth. *Science*, 40, 32-38.

Hafeez, M., Kazmi, Q. A., Tahira, F., Hussain, M. Z., Ahmad, S., Yasmeen, A., ... & Saqi, M. I. (2020). Impact of School Enrolment Size on Student's Achievement. *Indonesian Journal of Basic Education, 3*(1), 17-21.

Jeong, W., Keighley, C., Wolfe, R., Lee, W. L., Slavin, M. A., Kong, D. C. M., & Chen, S. A. (2019). The epidemiology and clinical manifestations of mucormycosis: a systematic review and meta-analysis of case reports. *Clinical microbiology and infection*, 25(1), 26-34.

Jia, Y. F., & Loo, Y. T. (2018). Prevalence and determinants of perceived stress among undergraduate students in a Malaysian University. *Journal of Health and Translational Medicine (JUMMEC), 21*(1).

Kalaivani, B., Dhivya, R., & Krishnakumare, B. (2018). Factors influencing stress: A study on higher secondary school students of Udumalpet Tamil Nadu. *International Journal of Education and Management Studies, 8*(2), 191-194.

Kauts, D. S. (2016). Emotional intelligence and academic stress among college students. *Educational Quest-An International Journal of Education and Applied Social Sciences*, *7*(3), 149-157.

Keogh, E., & French, C. C. (2001). Test anxiety, evaluative stress, and susceptibility to distraction from threat. *European Journal of Personality*, *15*(2), 123-141.

Langrock, A. M., Compas, B. E., Keller, G., Merchant, M. J., & Copeland, M. E. (2002). Coping with the stress of parental depression: Parents' reports of children's coping, emotional, and behavioral problems. *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology, 31*(3), 312-324.

Maajida Aafreen, M., Vishnu Priya, V., & Gayathri, R. (2018). Effect of stress on academic performance of students in different streams. *Drug Invention Today*, *10*(9).

Malach-Pines, A., & Keinan, G. (2007). Stress and burnout in Israeli police officers during a Palestinian uprising (Intifada). *International Journal of stress management*, *14*(2), 160.

Parker, P. D., Marsh, H. W., Ciarrochi, J., Marshall, S., & Abduljabbar, A. S. (2014). Juxtaposing math self-efficacy and self-concept as predictors of long-term achievement outcomes. *Educational Psychology*, *34*(1), 29-48.

Pizzie, R. G., & Kraemer, D. J. (2019). The Academic Anxiety Inventory: Evidence for dissociable patterns of anxiety related to math and other sources of academic stress. *Frontiers in psychology*, *9*, 2684.

Prabu, P. S. (2015). A study on academic stress among higher secondary students. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention*, *4*(10), 63-68.

Putnam, S. P. (2012). Positive emotionality. *Handbook of temperament*, 105-123.

Putwain, D. W. (2009). Assessment and examination stress in key stage 4. *British Educational Research Journal*, *35*(3), 391-411.

Rayle, A. D., & Chung, K. Y. (2007). Revisiting first-year college students' mattering: Social support, academic stress, and the mattering experience. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, *9*(1), 21-37.

Reddy, K. J., Menon, K. R., & Thattil, A. (2018). Academic stress and its sources among university students. *Biomedical and pharmacology journal*, *11*(1), 531-537.

Riley, P. J. (2003). The relationship between parental warmth and parental pressure to achieve with adolescent depression and anxiety in China. University of Maryland, College Park.

Salami, S. O. (2010). Emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, psychological well-being and students' attitudes: Implications for quality education. *European Journal of Educational Studies*, *2*(3), 247-257.

Sandal, R. K., Goel, N. K., Sharma, M. K., Bakshi, R. K., Singh, N., & Kumar, D. (2017). Prevalence of depression, anxiety and stress among school going adolescent in Chandigarh. *Journal of family medicine and primary care*, *6*(2), 405.

Stankovska, G., Dimitrovski, D., Angelkoska, S., Ibraimi, Z., & Uka, V. (2018). Emotional Intelligence, Test Anxiety and Academic Stress among University Students. *Bulgarian comparative education society*.

Stöber, J. (2004). Dimensions of test anxiety: Relations to ways of coping with pre-exam anxiety and uncertainty. *Anxiety, Stress & Coping*, *17*(3), 213-226.

Tohill, J. M., & Holyoak, K. J. (2000). The impact of anxiety on analogical reasoning. *Thinking & Reasoning*, *6*(1), 27-40.

Verma, S., Sharma, D., & Larson, R. W. (2002). School stress in India: Effects on time and daily emotions. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, *26*(6), 500-508.

Walker, D. L., Toufexis, D. J., & Davis, M. (2003). Role of the bed nucleus of the stria terminalis versus the amygdala in fear, stress, and anxiety. *European journal of pharmacology*, *463*(1-3), 199-216.

Yikealo, D., Yemane, B. & Karvinen, I. (2018). The levels of academic and environmental stress among College students: A case in the College of Education. *Open journal of Social Sciences, 6*(11), 40-57.

Zvolensky, M. J., Goodie, J. L., Ruggiero, K. J., Black, A. L., Larkin, K. T., & Taylor, B. K. (2002). Perceived stress and anxiety sensitivity in the prediction of anxiety-related responding: A multi challenge evaluation. *Anxiety, Stress & Coping*, *15*(3), 211-229.