

**Stress Level of plus two course Students in Villupuram District, Tamil Nadu - an Analysis**

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**ABSTRACT**

*Stress is our body's way of responding to any kind of demand. It can be caused by both good and bad experiences. Stress is believed to be caused by various problems that exist such as problems at school, financial problems, family problems and problems in their surroundings. Keeping in view the growing problem of academic stress among school students the study was undertaken to examine the level of academic stress among plus two school students. Essentially primary data were used for the purpose of this study. The data were collected through a structured questionnaire, which was field tested before finalized and administered. Ten schools – four governments, 4 private school and 2 government aided schools were selected for this study. Totally 200 students in the plus two course were selected. Convenience sampling method was adopted for this study. Karl Pearson's correlation, Chi-square, Factorial design and multiple regression analysis was used. The average stress level among boys was 90.75% and among Girls 92.59%. Majority of private school students (95.55%) experiencing stress in one or another form. I suggest mealtimes as a way to connect with your child. Give your child a quiet place to study, free of distractions, away from TV and video games.*

**KEY WORD:** *Chronic stress, energize exercise, infrastructure facilities, intellectual needs, Over-scheduling, parent's pressure, stress-related behaviors.*

## INTRODUCTION

Stress is a common problem that affects almost all of us at some point in our lives. Stress is our body's way of responding to any kind of demand. It can be caused by both good and bad experiences. When people feel stressed by something going on around them, their bodies react by releasing chemicals into the blood. These chemicals give people more energy and strength, which can be a good thing if their stress is caused by physical danger. But this can also be a bad thing, if their stress is in response to something emotional and there is no outlet for this extra energy and strength. Stress affects most people in some way. Acute (sudden, short-term) stress leads to rapid changes throughout the body. These stresses could prove beneficial in a critical, life-or-death situation. Over time, however, repeated stressful situations put a strain on the body that may contribute to physical and psychological problems. Chronic (long-term) stress can have real health consequences and should be addressed like any other health concern.

Stress is believed to be caused by various problems that exist such as problems at school, financial problems, family problems and problems in their surroundings. Teenagers also experience stress because they are sometimes trapped between making decisions which is to follow rules and orders or to be free and discover the world like they should. Teenagers in the past were trained for things that were suitable with their age so that they could use it to manage their lives. But now, teenagers have to follow their parents' desire which is preparing them to compete in the social system where the society is scrambling towards modernization so that they are not left behind. If it is not managed well, stress can ignite psychological disturbances among them when they are grown up.

According to **Zulkifli** (1988), teenagers always face problems in adjusting. Teenagers especially those who are students always face learning problems, career management and also problems in solving personal and social matters. These are the factors that contribute to stress in life. Students are starting to shift from a life that is dependent on others to a life that needs them to release the dependency and start carrying their own responsibilities.

**Morris** (1990) stated that teenagers always face stress in school and they compete each other to get better grades.

**Levine**, 1970 (in **Dobson**, 1980), explained that stress has a relationship with a specific situation like a learning environment in school and the inability to do work perfectly and the failure to achieve anything that is desired.

**Adams** (1983, in **Kamaruddin**, 1997) stated that the biggest problem among schooling teenagers is the matters associated with their schooling. Other than that, problems that female students have to deal with are communication and family problems. For the male students, their side problems are problems with getting involved in sports, recreation and also financial matters. Research based on the stress levels that are experienced by student have been done by **Chin** (2005) on students from Tunku Abdul Rahman (TAR) College, Malaysia. Meanwhile, **Gadzella** (2006) conducted a research on the stress levels in female students in a university with that, it is hoped that an effort or a program that can prevent stress among students will be planned out.

Information about the stress that is experienced by students can also help the more authorized group like parents, school and society in giving guidance to students on handling the stress that exist in them.

**Fariza** (2005) who conducted a research on the stress among teenagers found that this age group has to deal with the academic world. Therefore there exists demand and hope for themselves, their parents, teachers and the society to see them succeed. This is parallel to the research by **Mates and Alisson** (2007) which finds that among the academic factor that contributes to the stress in teenagers is their achievement in academics.

**Fielding** (2008) studied the characteristics of school students which affect their perceived level of stress. In this study the highest level of stress was reported in interpersonal situations and second highest level was reported in new situations.

**Dean** (2008) investigated that a large number of stressors and stress themes across the entire school environment was significantly related to parent's role at home. Parental encouragement leads to direct confrontation, social support, rationalization, repression and intellectualization as effective means of dealing with stress.

**Richardson** (2009) investigated the relationship of study stress and certain demographic variables related to study habits. She/he found a negative relationship between overall study stress and knowledge satisfaction.

**Larchick** (2009) did study on the effect of personal life stressors on the student's performance. She/he found that the students who didn't have any source of support were less effective in and outside the class room situations. In his study, **Pal** (2001) found that students studying in public schools were facing more stress than their counterparts studying in government schools.

**Tung and Chahal** (2009) 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. Each day we faced with new situations that demands decisions involve change in both our internal state and our external environment. The process of adjustment involves a person's attempt to cope with master and transcend such challenges. This working definition provides a starting point for understanding adjustment. However, adjustments are not always definite. Neither it is right or wrong nor do they necessarily have clear starting points or endings. This combination of questions can make the concept of adjustment difficult to grasp.

According to **Agarwal** (2010) the adjustment of adolescent very much depends on the fulfillment of their significant specific needs that consist of physical needs, emotional needs, social needs, intellectual needs, moral needs and vocational needs. It may be helpful, therefore, to devote a little more space to two important qualities of adjustment. First, it is a process that involves continuous changes and the second people develop consistent pattern of adjustment to these constant changes. Students make many transitions during their years of schooling: from home to school, middle to high school, and high school to college or work. These transitions are usually major events in the lives of students and parents. The stresses created by these transitions can be minimized when the new environment is responsive to each particular age group. This digest presents a brief overview of some of the issues involved in the transition from elementary to middle school and provide suggestions for transition programs and activities.

In a study **Isakson et al**, (2011) employed a short term longitudinal design to assess the adjustment of adolescents as they move from junior high to high school and found that the adolescents did experience significant changes during the initial transition into high school that were related to sense of school membership, perceived support from parents was also related to adolescents adjustment to the transition.

Keeping in view the growing problem of academic stress among school students the study was undertaken to examine the level of academic stress among plus two school students.

## OBJECTIVES

1. To explore the prevalence of stress level among the plus two school students.
2. To find out significant association between type of school and stress level among students.
3. To find out significant relationship between student's residential areas and stress level.
4. To find out the difference in the academic stress of boys and girls students studying in higher secondary schools.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

**Nature of the study:** This study is a descriptive study.

**Data:** Essentially primary data were used for the purpose of this study. The data were collected through a structured questionnaire, which was field tested before finalized and administered.

**Sample:** Ten schools – four governments, 4 private school and 2 government aided schools were selected for this study. The schools are located at villupuram district, Tamilnadu. Totally 200 students in the plus two course were selected. The sample contained 119 male Students and 81 girls.

**Sampling method adopted:** convenience sampling method was adopted for this study.

**Survey:** The survey was conducted during January - February, 2012.

**Data analysis:** Data were analyzed using SPSS 17 package.

## STATISTICAL TECHNIQUES USED

The collected data was tabulated and analyzed through the appropriate statistical techniques i.e. Karl Pearson's correlation was worked out between type of school and stress level. Chi-square test was used to find out the relationship between students residential areas and stress level. Factorial design was used and multiple regression analysis was also used.

## RESULTS WITH INTERPRETATION:

1. The average stress level among boys was 90.75% and among Girls 92.59%

This indicates that the girls at the plus two levels undergo more stress on an average than the boys. This proves that among the schoolchildren the girls are subjected to higher stress than boys. This gender influence of stress highlights that the schools concerned have to consider measures to study the reasons for higher stress level among the girls than the boys and evolve measures to help the girls to manage their stress. This does not mean that the stress among the boys can be ignored. The stress among the boys needs to be carefully monitored so as to help them to perform better. Generally boys are found to share the reasons for stress with their friends and use games or sports or watching films to manage their stress. But girls are generally introverts and they have relatively lesser opportunities available for them to share their stress with others and so they remain under stress without any significant attempt to manage it.

2. Majority of private school students (95.55%) experiencing stress in one or another form. This indicates that in one extreme parents are pressurizing their children's to perform better in all aspects without considering their potential and in other extreme teacher are urging their respective students to score well to get favorable rating from their peers. Hectic academic schedule in private schools makes the student more stress

3. Students whose mother who have not pursued higher education are having more stress than other category because they are having misconception that non pursuance of higher education has led them to economical and social backwardness. So they are pressurizing their respective children to achieve more in academics.

4. Students whose both father and mother are employed are experiencing more stress (96.26%) than others (86%) because Lack of time to monitor their children and their busy schedule which gives less time to spend with their children are the main causes for the high stress among children.

**HYPOTHESIS 1;**

H0: There is no significant association between type of school and stress level among students.

H1: There is significant association between type of school and stress level among students.

**Correlations**

		Type of the school	Stress level of the students
Type of the school	Pearson Correlation	1	.038
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.593
	N	200	200
Stress level of the students	Pearson Correlation	.038	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.593	
	N	200	200

The factors, stress level among the students and their types of school are moving in the same direction so the correlation between the two variables is positive. P value (sig.) for this problem is 0.593, which is greater than alpha 0.05, the level of significance. Therefore, there is not enough evidence to reject the null hypothesis. It means that there is no significant association between type of school and stress level among students.

**HYPOTHESIS 2:**

H0: there is no significant relationship between student’s residential areas and stress level.

H1: there is significant relationship between student’s residential areas and stress level.

**Chi-Square Test**

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	6.324 <sup>a</sup>	4	.176
Likelihood Ratio	6.063	4	.195
Linear-by-Linear Association	.288	1	.591
N of Valid Cases	200		

**Symmetric Measures**

	Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Contingency Coefficient	.175	.176
N of Valid Cases	200	

The value of the computed chi-square is 6.324; p-value is 0.176 as shown in the table which is above 0.05, the assumed level of significance. So there is no enough evidence to reject null hypothesis therefore there is no significant relationship between student’s residential areas and stress level. To find out how strong is this relationship? We used contingency coefficient test, lower limit is 0 and upper limit is 0.816. Now, the computed value of the contingency coefficient is 0.175 which is approximately a quarter in between 0 and 0.816. This means that there is a very low relationship between the variables.

**HYPOTHESES 3:**

Type of school:

H0: Average stress levels for all type of schools are equal.

H1: Average stress levels for all type of schools are not equal.

Residential areas:

H0: Average stress levels for all residential areas are equal.

H1: Average stress levels for all residential areas are not equal.

Interaction:

H0: Average stress levels for all 9 interactions are equal.

H1: Average stress levels for all 9 interactions are not equal.

**Tests of Between-Subjects Effects**

Dependent Variable: stress level of the students

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	2.608 <sup>a</sup>	8	.326	.820	.586
Intercept	876.871	1	876.871	2.205E3	.000
school type	1.197	2	.598	1.505	.225
residential	.082	2	.041	.103	.902
School type * residential	.808	4	.202	.508	.730
Error	75.947	191	.398		
Total	1169.000	200			
Corrected Total	78.555	199			

a. R Squared = .033 (Adjusted R Squared = -.007)

The p values given in the last column of table are all above than 0.05, the assumed level of significance. Therefore, there is no enough evidences to reject the null hypotheses (concerning type of school, residential areas and interaction). Therefore it can be concluded that there is no differences in the average stress level in student’s residential areas and their type of school and the interaction between the two variables.

**MULTIPLE REGRESSION MODEL:**

**Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.090 <sup>a</sup>	.008	-.002	.629

**ANOVA**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.634	2	.317	.801	.450 <sup>a</sup>
	Residual	77.921	197	.396		
	Total	78.555	199			

**Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.207	.157		14.101	.000
	education of mother	-.020	.040	-.036	-.501	.617
	parents employment	.109	.090	.086	1.211	.227

a. Dependent Variable: stress level of the students

The value of  $R^2$  equals 0.008 indicating that only 0.8 percent of the variations in the stress level among the students are explained by the education of mother and parents employment. The value of  $R^2$  is significant as indicated by the p value (0.000) of F statistic as given in ANOVA table. The estimated regression equation as obtained in table may be written as:

$$S=2.207-0.020E+0.10P$$

$$P \text{ value} = (0.000) (0.617) (0.227)$$

S = Stress level of students

E = education of mother

P = parents employment

The above estimated regression equation indicates that the education of mother is negatively related with stress level of students as is evident from the negative value of its coefficient (-0.020). Similarly the parent’s employment is positively related to the stress level as the coefficient for the employment variable is positive (0.227). The results indicate that impact of both education of mother and parent’s employment upon stress level are insignificant. This is evident for the p value of education of mother (0.617) and parent’s employment variable, which is 0.227. The significance of coefficient is indicated if the p value is less than or equal to the level of significance (alpha), which is assumed to be 0.05 in the present case.



## SUGGESTIONS

The stress would not happen in a school student at overnight. From this study it is clear that the parents are most responsible source of stress among school students. With teens, parents should watch for stress-related behaviors, and they must try to eradicate it in the early stage itself. Family time is crucial for cushioning stress. I suggest mealtimes as a way to connect with your child - "a minimum of 20 minutes sitting down together at least 4 to 5 times a week," Listen to your children, and communicate with them. Give your child a quiet place to study, free of distractions, away from TV and video games.

Teach students to budget their time wisely with homework. Try to do something every night instead of cramming at the last moment. Teacher has to teach their students to use a planner to keep track of assignments, when they finish each assignment, students can check them off for a feeling of accomplishment.

Over-scheduling is a big source of school stress. The challenge is to strike a balance between work and play. If your child feels overly stressed and overwhelmed, look for ways to cut back on school work and extra activities - though that's not easy for overachievers to hear. Worried about the physical and emotional costs of academic stress energize exercise to help cope with stress.

Some parents may not realize they're making school stress worse by pressuring their children to excel. But parents who want to ease children' stress must shift their perspective. Children often have too little unstructured time to relax and play,

"Remember to have fun in your school career, because lot of kids letting the stress consumes them."

## CONCLUSION

The results clearly indicated that the stress level differs among the genders. This means the methods of overcoming stress cannot be the same for boys and girls. The methods should be based on the factors causing stress among the boys and girls rather than any other basis. This is where the parents – teachers associations in the schools can play a lead role. By identifying the students who are under stress, they must periodically counsel the children, apart from discussing with the parents and teachers of these children.

Another vital finding is that children in the private schools are subjected to a higher level of stress. This calls for a focused attempt to address this issue. Among the factors, availability of teachers for all subjects, pressure applied on students to perform so that the school can get cent percent result, parents pressure to make the students work hard to enter the professional courses, parents insistence that the children should go for job in spite of good performance, etc can cause immense stress on children. As there are multiple factors the school authority in consultation with the parents – teacher association, state government higher secondary board and Ministry of school education must attend to the posting of required teachers at all schools, improving the infrastructure facilities in the schools, providing additional free coaching for students who apply for professional courses. Many schools are already providing counseling to students at the plus two levels, so as to help them overcome their stress and perform better. Unfortunately the counselors perform their work as an extension of teaching work rather than offering it as a professional support. While it may be financially unviable for all schools to recruit counselors, it will be better to explore the possibility of retaining the services of professional counselors on a weekly basis and rotational basis. Such support will go a long way to bring down the stress level among students.

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