

Educational Stress Among Adolescents in Kerala

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ABSTRACT

Background: Adolescence is a tremendous transition period between childhood and adulthood. It is one of the mile-stone in every individual's life. The study focused on the educational stress among adolescents in Kerala.

Objectives: The objectives of the study were identifying the level of educational stress among adolescents in Kerala and the relations between socio demographic variables with educational stress.

Method: Using a stratified random sampling 60 adolescents of age ranging from 15 to 18 years from Thrissur district in Kerala were selected for the study. The tool used is Educational Stress Scale for Adolescents (ESSA) along with informed consent and sociodemographic details.

Results: Result suggest that educational stress and age are not related to each other. Educational stress varies among gender (male or female), class of study, family type (joint or nuclear), day scholar living with parents or grandparents, hostellers, area of residence (rural or urban) and school curriculum (state syllabus or CBSE).

Conclusion: The study also provides scope for extended research in this field. The limitation and implications of the study also discussed.

Key words: adolescents, educational stress, gender, school curriculum, family type,

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a tremendous transition period between childhood and adulthood. It is one of the mile-stone in every individual's life. It starts from the age of 10 and lasts to the age of 18. It includes the growth of oneself both physically and psychologically. In current scenario adolescent issues are increasing and everyone views them in suspicion. No one can foresee the teen's thought process. It needs to be extra care while dealing with teenagers because of the methods and principles that form the basis of producing polite and socially acceptable people. They are prone to fall in social pressure and prejudiced attitudes which makes them emotionally imbalanced. There appears and identity crisis and role confusion in most of the teenagers. They are prone to prove themselves as adults while doing tasks. At this age the way to deal with needs and problems is to know about them and be ready to face them. Building self-esteem is an important factor which may affect the future life of the teens. They tend to feel overly emotional and mood swings along with the physical changes. It may result in self-consciousness, feeling of inferiority or superiority. Children gain and assert their independence during adolescence. This could lead to them challenging their parents' rules in an argumentative way and defending what they think is right. Teenagers may desire to explore new things and take chances as they grow more independent, which can lead to irresponsible behaviour. Peer pressure, curiosity and the desire to "fit in" can occasionally cause someone to act in a specific way or form bad habits that are difficult to stop. Teens also change in terms of how they dress, style their hair, and generally follow trends that others might not like. The most alarming behaviour may be the teen hanging out with troublemakers and embracing a dangerous way of life (World Health Organisation, 2024).

The majority of an adolescent's time is spent in school, hence one of the main risk factors for their mental health is academic stress. Adolescents' health might be negatively impacted by scholastic concerns since in many cultures, achieving high academic standing is the sole burden placed on them (Hosseinkhani et al, 2020).

Educational stress is also known as academic stress. Academic stress is a student's psychological state resulting from continuous social and self-imposed pressure in school environment that depletes student's psychological reserves (Zhang et al, 2022). Students experience academic stress throughout their educational career. Studies revealed that academic stress is positively associated with depression (Zhang et al, 2022). Academic stress is the result of worries about upcoming difficulties or failures in the classroom, or even just the fear of failing academically. Academic stress may be found in a student's surroundings in a variety of settings, including their home, school, peer relationships, and area. Excessive stress in the classroom can lead to a higher frequency of mental and physical health issues (Thakkar, 2018). Tests, grades, homework, academic expectations, and parental pressure are the main sources of academic stress. Stresses associated with education include ineffective teaching strategies, strained relationships between teachers and students, a severe workload, unsatisfactory physical classroom conditions, the difficulty to combine leisure activities with academics, and disorganize with regard to academic timetables and assignments. Concerns about grades and scores, time management issues, and the difficulty of meeting academic requirements are some more factors. Thus, it is believed that students are impacted by the harmful factors that lead to academic stress (Thakkar, 2018).

The study of Jayanthi et al (2015) revealed that the risk of depression was found to be 2.4 times greater in adolescents experiencing academic stress compared to those who did not. In a study Mudoj (2019) found that there is a serious level of academic pressure among adolescents. It was also found that how much pressure adolescents felt to achieve academically depended on a variety of factors, including their temperament, the subjects they took in high school, the size of their family, and the father's educational background. Pillai et al (2023) study findings revealed that among students, 70.8% reported low stress, 25.8% moderate stress, 0.002% severe stress, and 0.02% reported no stress at all. Participants who were female reported more stressed than those who were male. Individuals who had less educated mothers and fathers reported higher levels of stress. Parental pressure and the grade from the previous year's final exam were found to be significant stressors. In terms of coping strategy deployment, 0.5% of students never used any coping strategies, 53.6% of students used coping sometimes, 45% of students used coping regularly, and 0.8% of students used coping often.

Reddy et al (2017) revealed that 48.8% students experienced average to high academic stress. But there found no significant difference in stress among male and female participants. Students of commerce stream has high academic stress than management, science and humanities streams. Students of humanities stream has least academic stress. While Rentala et al (2019) found that significant correlations exist between academic stress and the factors of religion, father education, number of siblings, personality, IQ, and combination of subjects. Both the number of siblings and the extrovert neuroticism personality type were found to be protective factors and negatively correlated with stress. Academic stress in adolescent females was positively predicted by the combination of individuals' introverted neuroticism, illiterate father, Hindu religion, and commerce combination of subjects.

In another study Vandana and Duhan (2022) found that 47% of urban students had moderate academic stress. 44% of students from the scientific stream and 43% from the arts stream reported significant levels of academic stress among rural areas. 46% of students from the urban arts stream and 46% of students from the scientific stream reported high levels of stress. 48% of students from the arts and 46% from the science stream reported moderate levels of stress in urban areas. The academic stress levels of students from the rural arts and science stream and students from the urban and rural areas showed significant mean differences.

In the study of Vijay et al (2020) the prevalence of low stress was 30.33%, moderate stress was 39.78% and severe stress was 29.89%. The academic stress was more among males than females. Stress was more prevalent among parents with occupational skill level 1 and parents with substance use. Stress increased as the parents' socioeconomic status decreased. Zhang et al (2022) found that the prevalence of depressive symptom was 28.69% among the participants. The prevalence of sleep disturbances was found to be 27.95%. There found a high score in perceived academic stress among students. Perceived academic stress was found to be a significant predictor of depression.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The sample used in the present study included 60 adolescents of age ranging from 15 to 18 years from Thrissur district in Kerala, India. The type of sampling technique used was stratified random sampling. The questionnaires

were distributed to the participants through direct interview. The present study included equal participation of respondents from schools like St Aloysious in Elathuruth, Deepthi in Thallore, St Joseph in Pavarty, Devamatha in Thrissur, Chavara in Chalakudy and Christ Academy in Irinjalakuda of Thrissur district in Kerala in which 3 CBSE schools and 3 SCERT schools were included. The sample used in the present study included 29 male and 31 female adolescents. The inclusion criteria were i) those living in Thrissur district ii) the age group of 15 to 18 years. Exclusion criteria were i) participants below 15 years age ii) participant who is not a resident of Thrissur district. The participants completed informed consent, ensuring privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality in all respects. They were given the right to withdraw from the research at any point in time. An introduction was given to the participants and informed the purpose and significance of the present study.

Measures

The measures include the scales used in the study.

Educational Stress Scale for Adolescents: The scale was adapted to Greek by Darviri et al in 2014. It consists of 16 items that are answered on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from no stress to a lot of stress. The subscales include: study pressure, workload, concern about grades, expectations of oneself, and despondency. The validity of the scale is Cronbach α - 0.7, reliability is excellent which is 0.90 (Moustaka et al, 2023).

Sociodemographic Details: It is prepared for collecting the demographic details of the participants. It contained variables such as age, religion, gender, education, occupation, and marital status of parents, family type, number of family members, living house type, place of domicile, family income and source of income and so on.

Procedure

The data was collected using questionnaires which were distributed to samples through direct interview. The instructions for completing the scale were given and clarifications, when required were also given. To reduce participant stress and boredom, the questions were brief and had mostly rating scale type questions.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was employed by statistical techniques using SPSS 25.0 software. Correlational analysis was used in the present study to identify the relationship between age and educational stress among adolescents in Kerala. Parameters between the two groups were compared with paired sample t-test. The test is used in the present study to analyse gender, class, area of residence, school curriculum and family type. Parameters between three groups were compared using ANOVA. The present study used ANOVA to analyse the sociodemographic variables such as area of residence, participants living with whom, house type, number of siblings and household among adolescents among Kerala. $P < 0.05$ was defined as statistically significant relationship.

Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive analysis is a type of data study wherein data items are conveniently summarised, described, or shown in order to allow patterns to emerge that meet all of the data's requirements.

RESULTS

The research was designed to assess the level of educational stress among adolescents in Kerala and the relations between socio demographic variables with educational stress. The study's major statistical approaches were descriptive analysis, correlation, paired sample t-test and ANOVA. Table 1 represents the sociodemographic details of the participants of the study.

Table 1: *Sociodemographic details of the participants*

Variable	Percentage
Gender	
Male	48.3%
Female	51.7%
Age	
15	43.3%
16	48.3%
17	3.3%
18	20%
Family type	
Nuclear	76.7%
Joint	23.3%

Participants living with	
Hostellers	5%
With grandparents	3.3%
With parents	91.7%
Area of residence	
Urban	40
Suburban	33.3
Rural	26.7
No. of siblings	
Single child	5%
One sibling	63.3%
More than one sibling	31.7%
Household	
Single parent	3.3%
Divorced parent	1.7%
Happily married	95%
Father's education	
Up to 10 th level	30%
Higher secondary	10%
Graduation	26.7%
Post-graduation	33.3%
Mother's education	
Up to 10 th level	11.7%
Higher secondary	16.7%
Graduation	35%
Post-graduation	36.7%
Father's job	
Self-employed	65%
Private employee	25%
Govt. employee	10%
Mother's job	
Homemakers	50%
Self-employed	16.7%
Private employee	13.3%
Govt. employee	20%
Annual income	
Less than 25,000	11.7%
26,000 - 50,000	11.7%
51,000 - 75,000	5%
76,000 - 100,000	25%
More than 100,000	46.7%
House	
Own house	91.7%
Rental	6.7%
On lease	1.7%
Syllabus	
SCERT	50%
CBSE	50%
Participation from each school	16.7%

Table 2: *Distribution of The Respondents Based on Descriptive Statistics*

Variables	Mean	S.D
Gender	1.52	.504
G pre-total	81.3167	13.89121
S pre-total	50.5500	8.87851
W pre-total	46.1667	7.94721
S post-total	29.0833	4.36586
W post-total	60.4500	3.79306
C total-post	17.3500	1.20486

The table 2 represents the descriptive statistics of the respondents. The mean and standard deviation of the respondents for the gender was 1.52 and 0.504 respectively.

Table 3: Relationship between age and educational stress among

	Age	Educational Stress
Age	1	
Educational Stress	0.51	1

* Correlation is significant at the $p < 0.05$ level ** Correlation is significant at $p < 0.01$ level *** Correlation is significant at the $p < 0.001$ level.

Table 3 represents the correlation between age and gender. There found no significant relationship between educational stress and age among adolescents in Kerala.

Table 4: Analysis of sociodemographic variables between and within group among adolescents among Kerala.

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
School	Between Groups	60.750	28	2.170	.589	.920
	Within Groups	114.250	31	3.685		
	Total	175.000	59			
Area of residence	Between Groups	14.533	28	.519	.659	.866
	Within Groups	24.400	31	.787		
	Total	38.933	59			
Siblings	Between Groups	10.983	28	.392	1.801	.056
	Within Groups	6.750	31	.218		
	Total	17.733	59			
Marital status of parents	Between Groups	4.767	28	.170	.393	.993
	Within Groups	13.417	31	.433		
	Total	18.183	59			
Educational status of Father	Between Groups	37.733	28	1.348	.800	.723
	Within Groups	52.200	31	1.684		
	Total	89.933	59			
Educational status of Mother	Between Groups	21.767	28	.777	.631	.889
	Within Groups	38.167	31	1.231		
	Total	59.933	59			
Occupation of Father	Between Groups	8.700	28	.311	.531	.953
	Within Groups	18.150	31	.585		
	Total	26.850	59			
Occupation of Mother	Between Groups	39.217	28	1.401	.929	.576
	Within Groups	46.717	31	1.507		
	Total	85.933	59			

Annual household income	Between Groups	52.833	28	1.887	.867	.647
	Within Groups	67.500	31	2.177		
	Total	120.333	59			
Type of accommodation	Between Groups	3.433	28	.123	.958	.543
	Within Groups	3.967	31	.128		
	Total	7.400	59			

Table 4 represent the analysis of sociodemographic variables between and within group among adolescents among Kerala. There found a difference in Educational Stress between area of residence. No other significant difference was found.

Table 5: *Difference among paired groups among adolescents in Kerala*

	Paired Differences				
	Mean	S.D	t	df	Sig
Gender- educational stress	-49.03333	8.78166	-43.250	59	.000
Class- educational stress	-38.98333	8.92054	-33.850	59	.000
Family type - educational stress	-48.78333	8.92737	-42.328	59	.000
Day scholar or hosteler - educational stress	-49.50000	8.85954	-43.278	59	.000
Day scholar live with parents - educational stress	-49.56667	8.91840	-43.051	59	.000
Hosteler - educational stress	-50.50000	8.85954	-44.153	59	.000
Area of residence - educational stress	-48.68333	8.99810	-41.909	59	.000
School curriculum - educational stress	-49.05000	8.83833	-42.988	59	.000

There found a difference in Educational Stress with genders, class of study, family type, day scholar living with parents and grandparents and hostellers. No other differences in pairs were found.

DISCUSSION

Adolescence is a significant milestone in the lives of each person. It lasts from the age of ten to eighteen. It involves developing oneself on the physical and mental levels. Adolescent problems are growing in the contemporary environment, and everyone is suspicious of them. Nobody can predict the adolescent's mental process. Teenagers require special consideration when dealing with the techniques and values that shape the future generation of well-mannered, socially acceptable adults.

The aim of the present study was to identify the level of educational stress among adolescents in Kerala and identify the relations between socio demographic variables with educational stress. The present study included 60 adolescents of age ranging from 15 to 18 years from Thrissur district in Kerala, India. Educational stress scale for adolescents was used for the study. Stratified random sampling was used in the study. Used interview method for collecting data from participants.

Findings of the analysis revealed no significant relationship between educational stress and age among adolescents in Kerala. This implies that adolescents of all ages are impacted by educational stress and that age is not a determining variable in the experience of educational stress. But in the study of Lopuszanska-Dawid et al (2022) it was evident that ageing processes are strongly linked to stress and stressful events. But there found an association between age and educational stress in the study of Su et al (2012). It was found that older age is highly correlated to educational stress. The study doesn't support the present finding.

There found a difference in educational stress among genders. It suggests that there are gender disparities in the ways that educational stress is experienced, with one gender maybe being more vulnerable or impacted than the other. According to the study of Michale et al (2009) there found a difference in stress among gender and it was

found to be more in women than men. Another study of Ye et al (2018) it was found that academic stress had a moderating influence on academic self-efficacy based on gender, with female students experiencing a greater effect than male students. In the study of Banu et al (2015) the difference in gender was evident. Compared to male students, female students encountered higher levels of educational stress.

A difference was found in educational stress between classes of study. The amount of educational stress appears to vary based on the grade level or particular subject they are studying in; certain classes may be more stressful than others. There is a difference in educational stress between family types. Teenagers' levels of educational stress seem to be influenced by the sort of family structure they live in. But in the study of Su et al (2012) it was found that family or parental factors did not significantly influence children's educational stress. There found a difference in educational stress between day scholars living with parents and grandparents and hostellers. Teenagers' experiences of stress related to their education appear to be influenced by their living arrangements, whether they live with their family or in hostels.

A difference was found between educational stress and area of residence. According to the findings, variations in an adolescent's stress levels related to education can be attributed to the place or region in which they live. The findings support the results of the study of Dwyer & Miller (1990) among caregivers. The study revealed that the several characteristics of the care-receiver and the primary caregiver have a differential effect on stress and burden across residential areas.

There is a difference in educational stress between school curriculum was found. Adolescents' varying levels of educational stress appear to be influenced by the particular curriculum or educational system that their school uses. Arslan & Akbulut (2018) in their study discovered a strong correlation between educational stress and hidden curriculum. Correlation study revealed a statistically significant relationship between educational stress and the content, teaching and learning process, and evaluation subdimensions of the hidden curriculum. These results demonstrate the complexity of educational stress and the range of variables that might affect its incidence and intensity among teenagers in Kerala. It emphasises the necessity of individualised interventions and support networks that consider these many aspects instead than a one-size-fits-all strategy.

The results of this study provide important new understandings of the variables affecting educational stress among adolescents in Kerala. Age was not shown to be a decisive factor in the experience of educational stress, which goes against popular belief and suggests that teenagers of all ages can be affected by educational stress. The gender gap in stress levels related to education emphasises the need for support networks and therapies tailored to each gender. Tailored solutions to successfully meet the needs of teenage boys and girls can be informed by an understanding of the distinct problems and pressures that they encounter.

The study findings also show that the class of study, family type, living arrangement (day scholar or hosteller), place of residence, and school curriculum all have a major influence on educational stress. These considerations highlight the issue's complexities and the need for a sophisticated solution that takes into account teenagers' different backgrounds and situations.

The impact of family type and living condition on educational stress levels highlights the importance of the home environment and support structures. Interventions aimed at creating healthy family relations, effective communication, and a balanced approach to academic goals may help reduce stress.

The discrepancies discovered across different areas of residence and school curricula indicate that localised tactics and curriculum adjustments may be required to meet the distinct issues faced by teenagers in various locations and educational systems. Overall, the findings emphasise the complex character of scholastic stress and the importance of comprehensive, personalised treatments that meet the specific requirements of diverse demographic groups among teenage population in Kerala.

CONCLUSION

The present study focused on educational stress among adolescents in Kerala. Educational stress and age are not related to each other. Educational stress among teenagers in Kerala is a complicated issue driven by a variety of factors such as gender, study class, family type, living circumstances, area of residence, and school curriculum. The study's findings call into question the premise that age is a deciding factor, emphasising the importance of a nuanced and inclusive approach to addressing this widespread issue. The study also provides scope for extended research in this field. Limited sample size and geographical limitations were evident in the present study. Implications includes the revising the curriculum and changes in parenting.

Interventions and support systems must be customised to the individual requirements of various demographic groups, taking into consideration their particular circumstances and problems. Policymakers, educators, mental health specialists, and families must work together to establish effective ways for reducing school stress and promoting the general well-being of Kerala's teenagers. Further study and assessment of intervention programmes is required to ensure their efficacy and adapt to the changing demands of the teenage population. By tackling educational stress in a comprehensive and inclusive manner, Kerala may provide a supportive and conducive learning environment that fosters the intellectual, personal, and emotional growth of its students.

Educational stress may contribute to an unhealthy culture of competition and a limited concentration on academic accomplishment, while ignoring other areas of human development and well-being. Mental health has an implication in the area. The study helps to tap educational stress and implement proper mental health services such as counselling, stress management and coping. Which helps to focus physical health and psychosomatic issues such as sleep disturbances, changes in weight and appetite, head ache and stomach pain. High stress may lower student's motivation and creativity. They may lose interest in studying and following their passion. Which can have a negative impact on their overall growth and development. High amounts of stress can impair cognitive performance and cause underachievement. This can have an impact on future educational and professional chances.

The study has some limitation as the sample was limited to Thrissur district only. Conducting a large-scale survey on educational stress can be helpful for further study. The influence of technology, smartphone and social media on educational stress can explore the challenges and opportunities and can apply proper interventions.

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