

**THE POST SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENT'S STRESS IN RELATION TO THEIR  
ATTRIBUTIONAL STYLE.**

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**Abstract**

Psychological stress is a major problem of present era, especially for student population. Any situation that evokes negative thoughts and feeling in a person such as unpleasant, frustrating, irritable, worrisome and anxious is considered psychological stress.

According to Chalfant et al, (1990) psychological stress is “a continuous experience of unhappiness, nervousness, irritability and problematic interpersonal relationship.”

Psychological distress is effected by many factors like personality, characteristics, demand of situation, attributional style and ecology of classroom. Everybody in this world faces stressors in one or the other area of life. In this modern world, man is making various kinds of adjustments in his social, psychological, economical, religious and political spheres. These adjustment problems have become manifold in the recent years due to multi-factorial causes such as individualization, urbanization, industrialization and many more. An individual does not feel satisfied with what he has and is always in search of what he does not possess. Even school going children are under constant stress due to cut throat competitions and parental demands.

The present article discusses about a study of post secondary school student's academic stress and its relationship their attributional style. The sample was selected using random sampling techniques. The total sample size was 821 students studying in std. XI (HSC, Maharashtra State Board) Junior College of Greater Mumbai. The sample included 389 boys and 432 girls' students of Std XI. Findings indicated that: The significant difference was found in the academic stress of students irrespective of gender and faculty. The significant relationship was found in attributional styles of students with their academic stress. At the end some suggestions are given to parents, teachers, educators and counselors based on the present study.

## **Introduction**

Over the last few years, India has seen an increase in the rate of suicide amongst adolescent students'. Rate of suicides among adolescents has increased across India. This trend can be traced in Maharashtra too. Though the reason for committing suicides among adolescent may vary. The reasons behind suicides are frustration due to failure in academic performance. The main source of the frustration is stress may be academic stress among students in colleges. Parental pressure is another reason in which students fail to fulfill the expectation of their parents. Pressure among students and parents and their attitude and behavior in coping up with the stress and pressure is a major cause of concern.

Psychological stress is a major problem of present era, especially for student population. Any situation that evokes negative thoughts and feeling in a person such as unpleasant, frustrating, irritable, worrisome and anxious is considered psychological stress.

There are many reasons why a person experiences so much stress that its consequences are depression, high blood pressure, irritation, insomnia, eating disorders and even heart attacks. For young teens and adults in colleges it's the competition in various forms that take place such as the areas of academics, sports, social relationships, career selections, popularity ratings, financial successes and other areas of the human mind that we feel and sense that are the causes of stress. Psychological distress among adolescent is their attributional style. The term attribution is used to refer to the individual's perception of causations that is his explanation as to why the experiences and events have taken place. In other words how people perceive and explain the causes of their own as well as other's behavior. Attributional style has been demonstrated to play a mediating role between negative events and problems in living such as depression and shyness. 'Stress' is defined as a feeling of tension that is both biological and psychological. Stress in adolescents is as common as in adults. Stressed out and negligent parents, high expectations in academic or other performance, abused or deprived childhood, growing up tensions and demand for family responsibility are main causes of childhood and teen stress. The present generation is burdened with the 3P's (Peer, Parental and Performance,). The rapid overpopulation of our country clubbed with the uncountable opportunities available in the current world have created too much of tension for youngsters and even adults. There is someone competing with you for every little thing. But emphasizing the problems of the teens, academic and peer pressure is something that is ruining the lives of many. Another cause of increasing stress among present generation is attributional

style which means the way people understand the causes of things happening and the causes of people's behavior, including their own. Attributions may be correct or incorrect, and can form the basis of misunderstandings. In social psychology, attribution is the process of inferring the causes of events or behaviors. Psychological distress among adolescent is their attributional style. The term attribution is used to refer to the individual's perception of causations that is his explanation as to why the experiences and events have taken place. In other words how people perceive and explain the causes of their own as well as other's behavior. Attributional style has been demonstrated to play a mediating role between negative events and problems in living such as depression (Sweeney, Anderson & Bailey, 1986), loneliness (Anderson, 1983), and shyness (Alfano, Joiner & Perry, 1994). Attribution has three categories they are: 1) stable and unstable 2) Internal and external 3) Local and Global. There are two types of Attributional styles they are 1) optimist attributional style 2) pessimist attributional style.

#### **NEED OF THE STUDY:**

The review of related literature indicates that studies based on the variables, 'Academic Stress, Attributional Style' are very few. Therefore there is a need to do research in this area at post secondary school level.

We live in a very competitive world, in order to survive and do well in this intense competition one has to be the best. This is one of the reasons for high level of stress among the post secondary school students. Some psychological factors are also responsible for the high level of stress among the post secondary school student. Attributional style and ecology of classroom (classroom climate) are some of them. Researcher wanted to do study on these two variables and to find out whether the stress level of the post secondary school student is varied as per their attributional styles.

#### **STRESS**

##### **Conceptual definition**

##### **Stress :**

According to Levi, (1996) "Stress is cost by a multitude of demands (Stressors) such an inadequate fit between what we need and what we capable of, and what our environment offers and what it demands of us."

According to Steinberg and Ritzmann, (1990) Stress can be defined as "an under load or overload of matter, energy or information input to, or output from, a living system."

**Operational definition**

For the present study stress is operationalized as a feeling of Academic tension that is both psychological and ecological. Stress in adolescents is as common as in adults. Psychological factor like attributional style causes stress among the student. High expectations in academic or other performance, abused or deprived childhood, growing up tensions ecology of classroom and demand for family responsibility are main causes of childhood and teen stress. Students are stressed when there is pressure by peers, academic performance and parents.

**Attributional Style:****Conceptual definition**

According to Peterson & Seligman, (1984): Explanatory or attributional style is a cognitive personality variable that reflects how individuals explain bad events that happen to them.

Attributional style has been conceptualized (Craig & Curryhead, 1990) as being either pessimistic (internal, stable, and global for negative events and external, unstable, and specific for positive events) or optimistic (internal, stable and global for positive events and external, unstable and specific for negative events)

**Operational Definition**

For the present study attributional style is operationalized as how people explain the events of their lives. There are three facets of how student can explain a situation. This can influence whether they lean toward being optimists or pessimists:

**'Stable vs. Unstable:** Can time change things, or do things stay the same regardless of time?

**Global vs. Local:** Is a situation a reflection of just one part of your life, or your life as a whole?

**Internal vs. External:** Do you feel events are caused by you or by an outside force?

**AIM OF THE STUDY**

To Study Post Secondary School Student' Stress in relation to their Attributional Styles and Ecology of Classroom”

**OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

1. To ascertain gender difference in post secondary school student stress.
2. To compare the post secondary school student's stress on the basis of their attributional style.
  - a. Optimist Attributional Style (OAS)
  - b. Pessimist Attributional Style (PAS)

3. To ascertain gender difference in post secondary school student stress on the basis of attributional style:

- a. Optimist Attributional Style (OAS)
- b. Pessimist Attributional Style (PAS)

### **HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY**

1. There is no significant gender difference in post secondary school student stress.  
2. There is no significant difference in the post secondary school student's stress on the basis of their attributional style.

- a. Optimist Attributional Style (OAS)
- b. Pessimist Attributional Style (PAS)

3. There is no significant gender difference in post secondary school student stress on the basis of attributional style:

- a. Optimist Attributional Style (OAS)
- b. Pessimist Attributional Style (PAS)

4. There is no significant difference in post secondary school student's stress with respect to the following faculty:

- a. Arts    b. Commerce    c. Science

### **METHODOLOGY OF THE PRESENT STUDY**

In the present study the researcher has adopted descriptive method. It is a type of descriptive research since it describes conditions that already exist. It is a form of investigation in which the researcher has no direct control over independent variable as its expression has already occurred. It also attempts to identify reasons of pre-existing differences in groups of individuals.

#### **Sample of the present study**

In the first stage stratified random sampling technique was used to select schools on the basis of geographical areas. In the second stage students from Std. XI of Junior college using random and incidental sampling technique.

In the present study the population consists of students from Junior college (H.S.C. Board i.e. Maharashtra State Board) from North Mumbai, South Mumbai and Central Mumbai.

### **Tools of Research**

The data for the present study had to be obtained from the student of XI standard Junior colleges. The researcher made use of the following tools in the present study:

1. Academic Stress Scale
2. Children's Attributional Style Questionnaire

### **Analysis of Data**

The following statistical techniques were used in the study.

1. Descriptive Analysis: This included the following

- Measures of central tendency
- Measures of variability
- Graphical representation of data

- B) Inferential Analysis:

- t-test.
- Coefficient of correlation
- ANNOVA

### **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS:**

1. The null hypothesis states there is no significant gender difference of Post Secondary School Student's Stress. The technique used to test this hypothesis is t-test. The 't' of boys and girls (4.17) which is greater than the tabulated value of 't'. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. It is learnt that there is a significant gender difference of post secondary school student's stress.

2. There is no significant difference in the post secondary school student's stress on the basis of their attributional style. (a). Optimist Attributional Style (OAS) and (b). Pessimist Attributional Style (PAS). The technique used to test this hypothesis is t-test. The 't' of OAS and PAS (22.74) which is greater than the tabulated value of 't'. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. It is learnt that there is a significant difference of post secondary school student's stress on the basis of Attributional Style.

3. There is no significant gender difference in post secondary school student stress on the basis of attributional style. (a) Optimist Attributional Style (OAS), (b) Pessimist Attributional Style (PAS). The technique used to test this hypothesis is t-test. The 't' of boys and girls are 0.85 and 0.80 which is less than the tabulated value of 't'. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted. It is learnt that there is no significant gender difference of post secondary school student's stress.

4. There is no significant difference in post secondary school student's stress with respect to the faculty: (a) Arts (b) Commerce(c) Science. The p – value is greater than 0.05. Hence, there is no significant difference in the in post-secondary school student's stress with respect to science, commerce and arts. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted.

### **Recommendations from the Study:**

#### **Implications for Parents**

- Getting in the habit of looking on the positive side of life supports.
- Focus on the positives that happen during their day instead of replaying the negatives.
- Identify situations that cause their teen to have a negative outlook. For example, look to see if he's struggling in class or fighting with his best friend. When parents can pinpoint the source of the negativity, they are better equipped to help their adolescent come up with solutions to the problems.
- Parents should brainstorm with their teen to work on specific issues in their life. If they are at risk of failing a class, discuss what is happening in the subject. Help them set up a homework schedule when they lend on parents support. Suggest ways for them to ask for help from their teacher, or parent should contact the teacher themselves for insight. Offer to pay for a tutor who can help them better understand the subject. Giving them an actionable way to improve a difficult situation shows that it isn't hopeless.
- Compliment their teen with specific and honest praise.
- Parent should practice positive self-talk with teen. Help them to train their brain to think positively and push out negative thoughts. For example, if their child is dreading an upcoming test, discourage them from negative self-talk like, "I'm going to fail. I stink at science. There is no way I'll pass this test." Instead, have them practice saying, "I can pass this test if I put in the time to study."

#### **Implications for Principals and Teachers**

- Principal and Teacher should provide strong support to the students to reduce stress.
- Professors should keep in mind that the goal is not to eliminate all stress but to help students develop a variety of skills to cope with the negative aspects of stress.

- To assist students, faculty can recommend a number of strategies by Improving study habits, managing time wisely, learning positive self-talk, learning how to relax and joining a student support group. If students try strategies for coping and still experience the negative aspects of stress, then faculty should encourage students to seek professional counseling or therapy.

### **Implications for Counselors**

- School counselors must conduct interest and aptitude testing for students to guide them and channelize their latent talents and abilities in the right directions.

### **Conclusion:**

The present study revealed the relation between post secondary school student's stress and attributional style. Academic stress is psychological factor which is affected by many external and internal factors. Being aware of one's own style, teacher, parents and counsellor can support the students to develop optimist attributional style to reduce the stress level of the student. It can help teachers to develop respect and kindness towards students. The media, which can also contributes to solve the problem of academic stress, towards helping students navigate the 12th standard successfully. It is also necessary to develop interventions that address the serious mental health consequences that some students may experience as a result of academic stress, such as anxiety, depression, or even suicide. Although there are suicide prevention hotlines and mental health professionals who specialize in academic stress, who help students to self-identify their need for help. To address the issue at an earlier stage (i.e., before the need for suicide prevention specialists), students, parents, and teachers must be taught to recognize common symptoms of distress in their peers, children, and students.

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