



Effect of counseling on reducing academic stress among students in government and private schools

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Abstract

Academic stress is a significant concern among students, impacting their mental health and academic performance. This study investigates the effect of counseling on reducing academic stress among students in government and private schools. The research examines how structured counseling interventions alleviate academic stress and improve coping mechanisms. A sample of 40 students (20 from government and 20 from private schools), aged 13-18 years participated in the study. Pre-test and post-test assessments were conducted using the Academic Stress Scale (Md Akram, Md Khan and Sahiba Baby) to measure academic stress and engagement levels before and after the intervention. The intervention consisted of weekly counseling sessions over four weeks, focusing on reducing academic stress level and its various triggers among school students. Data analysis involved mean, standard deviation, paired t-tests to compare pre and post-intervention scores to evaluate the effect of counselling on student's stress levels of government and private schools. The results indicated a significant decline in academic stress post-counseling showing marked progress. The current study concludes that counseling significantly reduces academic stress among students. Implementing comprehensive counseling programs in schools can also aids in fostering a supportive environment, promoting mental wellbeing and academic success.

Keywords: Academic stress, counselling intervention, mental wellbeing

Introduction

Concept of Stress

Stress is an inevitable event in the life of young children and adolescent; under the stressful situation in the home and school; most of the adolescents use defense mechanism to reduce the stress but that does not change the overall stressful situations nor does it help the adolescent to gain relief from their stress permanently. Most of the adolescent simply talk, laugh and cry under stress but it gives temporary relief and the stress continues to affect the adolescents, this age is rightfully called the age of stress. Stress and its management is the "in thing" today and are gaining paramount importance.

Academic Stress

Academic stress is a prevalent issue among students, affecting their mental health, well-being, and academic performance. Various factors contribute to academic stress, including high expectations, workload, and examination pressure. Counseling has emerged as a key intervention to alleviate academic stress and support students in managing their educational demands effectively. This research paper investigates the effect of counseling on reducing academic stress among students in government and private schools, aiming to provide a comprehensive understanding of its impact and implications.

Academic stress, according to Bisht (1989) ^[1], is a demand related to academics that taxes or exceeds the available resources (internal or external) as cognitively perceived by the student engaged. Academic stress, according to her, reflects an individual's perception of academic frustration, academic conflict, academic pressure, and academic worry. She has defined the four components of academic stress as follows:

- **Academic Frustration:** It is a state generated by the failure to achieve certain academic goals.
- **Academic Conflict:** It occurs when two or more people have incompatible responses to academic aims.
- **Academic Pressure:** When a student's time and efforts are being stretched to accomplish academic goals.
- **Academic Anxiety:** Fear of jeopardizing academic aspirations. It is a significant component in explaining diversity in academic achievement. It also contributes to serious mental health risks, as well as physical and mental stress-related disorders.

Adolescents

Adolescents are generally most prone to stress and anxiety. Being in a transitional stage between childhood and adulthood, adolescents have to confront with varied types of stresses and strains. The rising expectations of the parents in terms of scores and academic performance sometimes put extra burden on children, which may sometimes cause many physical or mental ailments, if not dealt effectively. But academic stress has an adverse effect on the mental health of adolescents, healthy parents and healthy teachers are always boon to the society. In the classroom situation the task of the teacher is always challenging and baffling, when even he faces the heterogeneous group with multiple diversity in the traits. It is very much true that some students are under active stress and some are normal, some are adjusted and some are maladjusted. In such situations, it is very important to understand each child and also find out the impact of negative traits and positive traits in the development of the child. If such individuals are not taken care, they may lose equilibrium of the self and with the

environment. Hence it is very important to identify the adolescents possessing stress and also to see the effect of stress on the health of the adolescents.

Counselling

Counselling is considered essential and most significant part of the whole guidance programme in educational institutions. In general, counselling is referred to piece of advice, a suggestion, or recommendation. However professionally, counselling is the scientific process of serving the individual to understand him/herself better concerning his/her environment so that he/she becomes self-dependent, self-directed and self sufficient and can lead a better and meaningful life. Counselling is designed at helping the individual in solving problems that are already present, prevent the incidence of problems in the future, and enhance personal, social, emotional, educational, and vocational development. Thus, counselling has remedial, preventive and developmental aspects (IGNOU 2017) [4].

Effect of Counseling on Academic Stress

Everyone is stressed to some extent. The way you respond to stress, on the other hand, has a significant impact on your overall well-being. Any form of change that creates physical, emotional, or psychological distress is referred to as stress. One's body's reaction to anything that requires attention or activity is called stress. Students are exposed to a wide range of potentially stressful situations in their daily academic lives, which can have a negative impact on both their academic achievement and their health. Among the factors that may be weakened by academic stress are self-efficacy expectations, which are regarded as one of the most important determinants of student engagement, persistence, and academic success. Sometimes the best way to deal with stress is to change your situation. Other times, changing your response to a situation is the best strategy. Short-term and long-term stresses are both possible. Both can induce a range of symptoms, but prolonged stress can be detrimental to one's health in the long run. As a result, they must be educated on healthy coping strategies. Counselling sessions and other student support systems must be better organized to address issues such as career guidance, healthy coping behaviors, time management, and improving self-esteem among those affected. It is also important to pay attention to making the study environment in the classroom less stressful and free of excessive academic load. This would accomplish the aim of reducing academic stress, improving academic performance, and minimizing anxiety.

Review of Literature

A study administered by Singh and Mishra (2021) [9] explored the differences in academic stress among students in urban versus rural government schools. They found that students in urban schools, who had better access to counseling services, reported lower stress levels compared to their rural counterparts.

A research conducted by Bradley, Henderson, and Montero (2021) [2] synthesized findings from multiple studies on the effectiveness of school-based counseling in reducing academic stress. The review concluded that consistent counseling interventions, particularly those incorporating cognitive-behavioral techniques and mindfulness practices,

are effective in mitigating stress and promoting academic success across diverse student populations.

According to Smith and De Los Reyes (2020) [10], school counseling programs significantly reduce stress levels and improve students' coping strategies. A meta-analysis by Richardson and Rivera (2018) [8] found that counseling interventions focusing on stress management techniques, such as mindfulness and cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), are particularly effective in reducing academic stress.

Gudino, Maffini, and Dominguez (2020) [3] conducted a study on high school students and found that those who participated in a structured counseling program reported lower levels of academic stress and improved academic outcomes. The intervention included sessions on stress management, time management, and cognitive restructuring. A research study administered by Tang, Byrne, and Qin (2020) [11] examined the impact of mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) on students' academic stress. Their findings indicated that students who underwent MBSR reported significant reductions in perceived stress and improvements in emotional regulation, which contributed to better academic performance.

Jones and Kahn (2019) [6] compared the effectiveness of counseling interventions in reducing academic stress between students in government and private schools. Their study found that while both groups benefited from counseling, private school students experienced slightly greater reductions in stress, likely due to the more comprehensive support services available in private institutions.

Liu and Barnhart (2019) [7] indicated that private schools often have more comprehensive counseling services, which can lead to better stress management among their students. However, government schools also show significant improvements when counseling services are effectively.

Objectives

The objective of the present research is as follows

1. To investigate the impact of counseling on reducing academic stress among students in government and private schools.

Hypothesis

On the basis of referring review of literature, in majority of the studies it was found that most of studies have positive effect of counselling on reducing academic stress among school students and therefore the hypothesis of the current study is formulated as:

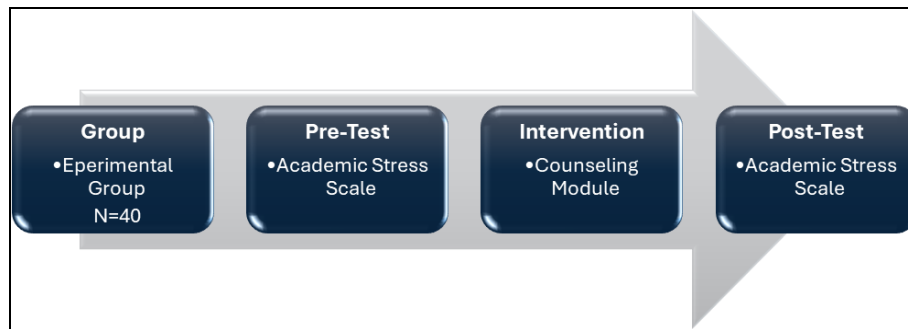
2. There is a significant effect of counselling on reducing academic stress among students in government and private schools.

Test Description

Academic Stress: ASQ was a 36 items questionnaire used to assess the academic stress of high school students and was developed by Mohammad Akram, Mohd. Ilyas Khan and Sabiha Baby. The ASQ provides five factors namely inadequate academic environment in college/university, lack of adjustment, apprehensive about future, poor administration and worries.

Methodology Research Design

a. Pre-Post Test Design



Locale

All the respondents were selected from the urban areas of Udaipur city, Rajasthan.

Sample

The study included a sample of 40 students, aged 13-18, from both government and private schools. The sample was stratified to ensure representation across different grades and genders.

Variables of the Study

a. Independent Variable

- Counseling intervention

b. Dependent Variable

- Academic Stress

Data Collection

The raw data was collected on several levels such as pre-test scores of academic stress among school students, post-test scores of students after applying counseling module etc. All such data was systematically processed with the help of statistical tools to obtain a significant comparison of pre and post scores as well as to get a justifiable confirmation for the significance of the research conducted.

Scoring

Scoring of standardized test for academic stress of randomly selected adolescents was done with the help of the manual of the selected test.

Practical Conduction

As per the sampling design 40 students was selected, 20 students from Government School and 20 students from Private school. Prior permission was taken from principal of the respective schools. Academic Stress Scale was administered on them. The instruction was given to students before filling the questionnaire. All the responses was collected and was used for analyze exam was done with the help of manual.

After finding their high scores on academic stress scale, a suggestive Counselling Module was applied to 40 students of Experimental Group. Post-Test of academic stress scale was done after a period of one month (four weeks). For both Experimental Group and Control Group, the collected data was used for statistical analysis.

Development of Counseling Module

As we know that high level of academic stress is one of the most universal forms of a academic issues in a student's life

and this can only be resolved with the help of proper and timely intervention. Acknowledging this issue and seeking help is not always easy. Many sufferers do not seek help or advice out of the fear of being judged. Appropriate Counseling techniques used in module can help reducing academic stress among adolescents which finally lead them to a more fulfilling and stress-free student life. The counseling module for current research was made with the help of several subject experts, mental health professionals and academicians.

Description of Counselling Module

Week 1, Session 1: Understanding Academic Stress, Goal Setting, and Planning

Week 2, Session 2: Effective Time Management and Enhancing Study Skills

Week 3, Session 3: Identifying & Overcoming Barriers and Building Resilience

Week 4, Session 4: Self-Reflection, Feedback, Future Planning, and Closure

Tenure of Counseling: The counseling module spanned four weeks, with a total of four sessions of direct counseling intervention per student. This intensive program was designed to provide sustained support and foster significant reductions in academic stress. This structured counselling module aimed to equip students with the necessary skills and mindset to reduce academic stress, ultimately leading to improved well-being and academic performance.

Respondents for Research

The sample was drawn from randomly selected students from government and private schools of Udaipur city. Adolescents from both the gender were equally selected. The age criterion was kept in mind as per the age range of adolescents i.e. 13 to 19 years of age (as per World Health Organization). The criterion of getting selected in the sample size was purely based on consent to participate in the research study. Selection of respondents at application of counseling module was a purposive selection based on the participants scoring high on academic stress. Proper consent was taken from all the respondents at every level of data collection and counseling sessions.

Statistical Techniques

Basic statistical tools such as mean, standard deviation (S.D.) paired 't' test, Kurtosis & skewness were used. All the calculations were done through SPSS Version 21.0.

Analysis of Result and Discussion

Table 1: Comparison of Total Academic Stress Scores before and after Counselling

Total Sample of Academic Stress		
	Pre-Test	Post-Test
Mean	112.33	83.65
N	40	40
S.D.	6.281	5.789
Mean Diff	28.675	
't'	52.648	
p-value	0.000	

The above table shows that the mean and standard deviation of pre test scores of total academic stress for total sample (both studying in government and private schools) was found to be 112.33 & 6.281 respectively and the mean and standard deviation of post test scores of total academic stress for total sample (both studying in government and private schools) was found to be 83.65 & 5.789 respectively. The mean difference was found to be 28.675 and the 't' score was 52.648 which was significant at 0.01 level ($p < 0.01$). It infers that there is a significant difference between pre and post test scores of total academic stress among total sample (both males and females studying in government and private schools). Furthermore, the mean score suggests that post test scores has significantly lower total academic stress as compared to pre test scores. It may be due to the fact that the process of counseling plays a crucial role in reducing total academic stress among both male and female students across government and private schools by offering personalized support and effective coping strategies. Counselors create a safe and confidential environment where students can openly discuss their academic challenges, whether related to exams, coursework, or future aspirations. Through tailored sessions, counselors help students identify stress triggers, develop time management skills, and build resilience. By addressing academic pressures proactively and equipping students with practical tools for managing stress, counseling empowers them to approach their studies with greater confidence and focus. This support not only enhances their academic performance but also fosters a positive attitude towards learning and personal growth regardless of the school environment.

Table 2: Comparison of Kurtosis & Skewness Scores before and after Counselling

Academic Stress		
Pre-Test	Kurtosis	-0.48094
	Skewness	0.39086
Post-Test	Kurtosis	-0.55594
	Skewness	0.68024

The above table shows that the pre-test scores of kurtosis and skewness regarding total academic stress are -0.16914 and 0.47039 respectively whereas the post-test scores of kurtosis and skewness regarding total academic stress are -0.49661 and -0.09206 respectively. It shows that the scores are normal, lies on the normal probability curve (since the scores are less than 1) and hence parametric testing has been used.

Conclusion

Conclusively, from the given result tables and interpretation, it can be concluded that there is a significant positive effect of counselling module on alleviating academic stress of students. The hypothesis for the present study "There is a significant effect of counselling on reducing academic stress among students in government and private schools." is accepted.

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