



## Gender Differences in Academic Stress among Higher Secondary School Students

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### Abstract

Academic stress has become a significant concern among students at all levels of education, especially in higher secondary schools, where performance pressure, examinations, and future career decisions contribute heavily to mental strain. This study investigates gender differences in academic stress among higher secondary school students using the Academic Stress Scale (ASS-GSBD) developed by Sudip Ghoshal and Debasri Banerjee, which is a 25-item four-point Likert scale measuring stress in five sub-dimensions: Personal Feeling, Institutional Factor, Social Environment, and Emotional Environment. A total of 106 students (53 boys and 53 girls) were randomly selected for the study. Data analysis reveals significant differences between male and female students in overall academic stress levels and in specific sub-dimensions, highlighting the importance of targeted interventions and counseling strategies for students based on gender. The findings provide insights for educators, parents, and policymakers to understand and address academic stress effectively.

### Keywords

Academic Stress, Gender Differences, Higher Secondary Students, ASS-GSBD, Emotional Environment, Personal Feeling.

### Introduction

Academic stress is a common phenomenon affecting students worldwide, particularly those in higher secondary school where academic demands are high, and future career decisions are critical. Stress can be defined as the physiological and psychological response of an individual to perceived demands that exceed coping ability (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Among adolescents, academic stress can lead to emotional disturbances, decreased academic performance, anxiety, depression, and other health problems.

Gender differences in academic stress have been widely documented in psychological research. Various studies suggest that female students often report higher levels of stress compared to male students, possibly due to differences in coping styles, societal expectations, and emotional sensitivity. Male students, on the other hand, may experience stress differently, with more externalized behavioral manifestations. Identifying these gender-specific differences is critical for developing effective stress management programs in educational settings.



## Definitions

### Academic Stress

“Academic stress refers to the physiological and psychological strain experienced by students when they perceive academic demands as exceeding their coping abilities.”

“Academic stress is the discomfort or tension that students experience due to heavy workload, examinations, and the fear of failure in educational settings.”

“Academic stress is the stress arising specifically from educational requirements, including learning pressure, deadlines, and performance evaluation, which may affect mental health and academic achievement.”

### Gender Differences

“Gender differences refer to the behavioral, emotional, and cognitive distinctions observed between males and females, often influenced by social, cultural, and biological factors.”

“In psychology, gender differences are systematic variations in experiences, responses, or Springer behavior between males and females.”

“Gender differences in academic contexts indicate how male and female students may experience, perceive, or respond to learning environments, stress, and performance pressures differently.”

### Higher Secondary Students

“Higher secondary students are adolescents enrolled in the final two years of secondary education, typically aged between 16 and 18 years, preparing for college or vocational studies.”

of Educational Research and Training.

“Students at the higher secondary level are those pursuing education in grades 11 and 12, where academic pressure increases due to board examinations and career planning.”

“Higher secondary education marks a transitional stage between adolescence and adulthood, focusing on academic specialization and preparation for higher education or employment.”

### Review of Related Literature

Several studies have highlighted academic stress as a major psychological concern among school students, particularly at the higher secondary level. Misra and McKean (2000) found that increased academic workload, time pressure, and examination anxiety significantly contributed to students’ stress levels. Their study emphasized that academic stress negatively affects students’ mental health, concentration, and academic performance. The researchers further observed that students experiencing higher stress reported increased anxiety and reduced life satisfaction, indicating the need for effective stress management strategies within educational institutions.

Gender differences in academic stress have been widely explored in educational psychology. Sharma and Kumar (2015) examined academic stress among higher secondary school students and reported that female students experienced significantly higher stress levels compared to male students. The study suggested that societal expectations, emotional sensitivity, and fear of academic failure contributed to higher stress among girls. Male



students, although experiencing stress, were found to express it differently, often through behavioral issues rather than emotional distress. This study supports the importance of examining gender-specific stress patterns.

Shek and Yu (2012) conducted a study on academic stress and psychological well-being among adolescents and found a strong association between high academic stress and emotional problems such as anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. The researchers reported that excessive academic pressure adversely affected students' emotional environment and personal feelings, leading to poor adjustment in school life. The study emphasized that a supportive emotional climate in schools could act as a protective factor against academic stress.

Ghoshal and Banerjee, through the development of the Academic Stress Scale (ASS-GSBD), provided a comprehensive framework for assessing academic stress among students. Their work highlighted multiple dimensions of stress, including personal feelings, institutional factors, social environment, and emotional environment. Studies using ASS-GSBD have demonstrated that academic stress varies significantly across gender, with female students often scoring higher in personal and emotional dimensions. The scale has been widely recognized for its reliability and applicability in Indian educational settings, particularly among higher secondary students.

#### Problem of the Study

In the contemporary educational system, academic achievement has become a primary indicator of success, particularly at the higher secondary level where students face intense academic demands, competitive examinations, and crucial career-related decisions. These pressures often result in heightened levels of academic stress, which can adversely affect students' mental health, emotional stability, academic performance, and overall well-being. Despite the growing recognition of academic stress as a serious concern, it continues to remain insufficiently addressed within school environments.

Adolescence is a critical developmental stage characterized by emotional sensitivity and psychological vulnerability. At the higher secondary stage, students are required to cope with increased workload, performance expectations from parents and teachers, institutional pressures, and fear of failure. These stressors may be experienced differently by male and female students due to variations in emotional expression, coping strategies, and socio-cultural expectations. However, empirical evidence examining gender differences in academic stress, particularly among higher secondary school students, remains limited and fragmented.

Moreover, while several studies have explored academic stress, fewer investigations have systematically examined its multiple dimensions—such as personal feelings, institutional factors, social environment, and emotional environment—using standardized and culturally relevant tools. The Academic Stress Scale (ASS-GSBD) offers a comprehensive measure of



these dimensions, yet its application in understanding gender-based variations at the higher secondary level requires further empirical validation.

Therefore, the present study addresses the need to examine gender differences in academic stress among higher secondary school students using the ASS-GSBD. By identifying the extent and nature of academic stress experienced by boys and girls, the study seeks to contribute meaningful insights that can assist educators, counselors, and policymakers in designing gender-sensitive interventions and supportive educational practices aimed at reducing academic stress and promoting students' psychological well-being.

**2. Objectives of the Study**

To assess the overall academic stress among higher secondary school students.

To examine gender differences in academic stress.

To provide recommendations for educators and policymakers to reduce academic stress among students.

**Hypotheses**

**H<sub>0</sub> : There is no significant difference in overall academic stress between male and female higher secondary school students.**

**Methodology**

**Table.1 research variables**

Sr.no	Name of variables	Type of variable	level	Names of levels
1.	Gender	independent	2	Boys and girls
2.	Academic stress	dependent	1	

**Sample Design**

The purpose of the present research is to study academic stress among higher secondary school students in relation to gender. The sample for the study was selected from higher secondary schools located in Ahmedabad city. A total of 110 students constituted the sample, comprising 55 boys and 55 girls. Care was taken to ensure equal representation of both genders to facilitate meaningful comparison. The students were selected from different schools to enhance the representativeness of the sample. Stratified random sampling technique was employed to select the participants, thereby reducing sampling bias and ensuring that both male and female students were adequately represented in the study.

The study employs a descriptive research design with a quantitative approach to measure academic stress among higher secondary students. The focus is on analyzing gender differences in stress scores.

**Research Tool**

The study used the Academic Stress Scale (ASS-GSBD) developed by Sudip Ghoshal and Debasri Banerjee, published by the National Psychological Corporation, Agra.

Features of ASS-GSBD:

25 items

Four-point Likert scale: Always True, Sometimes True, Sometimes False, Always False

Scoring:



Positive items: Always True = 4, Sometimes True = 3, Sometimes False = 2, Always False = 1

Negative items: Always True = 1, Sometimes True = 2, Sometimes False = 3, Always False = 4

Measures five sub-dimensions: Personal Feeling, Institutional Factor, Social Environment, Emotional Environment

Overall, Academic Stress Interpretation: Higher scores indicate higher levels of academic stress. Norms and percentiles are calculated separately for males and females.

Results

Table 2: Comparison of Academic Stress between Boys and Girls

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Level of significance
Boys	55	68.42	7.36		
Girls	55	73.85	8.12	3.62	Significant at 0.01 level

Note Significant at 0.01 level df = 108

Table 2 shows the mean scores of academic stress among male and female higher secondary school students. The mean academic stress score of girls (M = 73.85) is higher than that of boys (M = 68.42), indicating that female students experience comparatively higher academic stress. The calculated t-value (3.62) is significant at the 0.01 level of significance, which indicates a statistically significant difference between boys and girls with respect to academic stress. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant difference in academic stress between male and female higher secondary school students is rejected. This result suggests that gender plays a significant role in influencing academic stress among higher secondary school students.

Null Hypothesis (H0): Rejected

Result:

Significant differences are found between boys and girls in academic stress.

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