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A STUDY ON PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH PROBLEMS OF GIRL STUDENTS DUE TO STRESS IN EDUCATION

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Abstract

Education is an essential instrument to bring social revolution. It is the only remedy to bring about the desired social change in the society, at all levels and ages of children. Higher education is the third stage of education, which is acquired by the learners through the learning process. Sex biases are very common everywhere whether it is in educational institution, society in general and in home. Girls face the sex-bias in curriculum transaction, books, allocation of subjects, participation in activities etc. Poor family status and care of siblings and household chores at home are also considered the factors affecting education of girls. Minimizing the above mentioned problems, girls in rural area may achieve success in their higher education. Proper guidance and counselling to illiterate parents, fees concessions and other facilities offered for the rural girls regarding higher education and career development may also be key stone in carrier of girl and their higher education. In present study the sex biases reported as major problem in maximum girls at home and society level followed by early age marriage and financial problem. The household chores at home are also considered the factors affecting education of girls. The girl students are highly motivated to avoid higher education. At college level, financial problem is major factor affecting girls' education followed by transportation, co-educational problem; gender discrimination and physical harassment at college level were reported as factors affecting girl's higher education. This study investigates the psychological and physical health problems experienced by female students between the ages of 16-23 due to educational stress. The research focuses on a sample of 660 Inter, under graduate and postgraduate (PG), B.Tech, and M.Tech students. The findings highlight the prevalence of stress-induced issues and provide recommendations for better stress management and mental health support in academic environments.

Keywords: Stress, Problems, Challenges, Psychological Health, Physical Health, Female Students, Higher Education.

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Introduction

Education plays a critical role in shaping future professionals, but it also places significant demands on students, often leading to stress. For female students in higher education, stress can impact both psychological and physical health [1]. Education is an essential instrument to bring social revolution among. It is the only remedy to bring about the desired social change in Indian society, at all levels, and at all ages of children. Education has been considered as one major agency of socialization, while teachers and educational institutions as socializing agents [2]. It is the key tool, which can be successfully used against the deep rooted evils prevailing in the society. Higher education is the third stage of education, which is acquired by the learners through the learning process. It is under taken in Universities, colleges or Higher Education Institution and virtual or distance mode.

Sex biases are very common everywhere whether it is in educational institution, society in general and in home. These biases generate barriers in terms of both structure and attitude in girls of rural areas [3]. The girls are facing problems in society in terms of social, economic, and educational [4]. The social attitude towards girl's education is generally negative. Education for girls is considered as an important practice to expel out the evils of society such as pardah

system, early marriage, parental illiteracy, lack of educational facilities at home [5]. The male tutors and teachers and responsibilities of girls at home are the other difficulties among girls to access the education. Poor family status and care of siblings and household chores at home are also considered the factors affecting education of girls. The girl students are highly motivated to avoid higher education [6]. Parent's opinion about expensiveness of higher education, family guidance and out of reach to counseling for higher education in rural girls and their parents are also hindrance factors. Minimizing the above mentioned problems, girls in rural area girls may achieve success in their higher education. Proper guidance and counseling to illiterate parents, fees concessions and other facilities offered for the rural girls regarding higher education and career development may also be key stone in carrier of girl and their higher education.

The present study was aimed to give suggestions for rural girls to pursue higher education and about rights in constitution as equal opportunity with regard to higher education and employment opportunities to girl and boy students without any discrimination. The development of any nation is very essential, recognition of extraordinary aspiration and potential for technological and economic development in India depends on higher education. This study is focused to identify the challenges faced by female students in higher educational institutions and their families.

Higher education is the education beyond the level of secondary education and it is often imparted by the colleges or universities. Women's education play a significant role in building the nation, socio-cultural, human capital, economic development of a nation. It makes women capable to understand the societal norms; provide individuals self-reliance, and discourages discrimination based on gender, beliefs, religion and social class. Female can be empowered through higher education as a qualified leader in society and it make them role models for younger girls. Educated woman have control over her live and resources within the family [7]. Women get social recognition and can get insight of and can make aware of about undesirable and unfavorable things related to their current situation. In present scenario, female students and teachers are facing many problems that obstruct their potential and disturb their professional and personal development. The present study was aimed to highlight the challenges faced by female students in higher education and measures to minimize and overcome from this problem. This study emphasized the importance of female education, and a reconsideration of the socio-cultural direction of the country to improve female empowerment. This study aims to explore the extent of these effects among girl students aged 21-25 pursuing B. Tech, M. Tech, and PG degrees, focusing on common health problems and potential strategies for stress management.

Review of literature

The increasing pressure of education has significantly impacted students, particularly girls, who face unique challenges that contribute to academic stress. Various studies have examined the causes, effects, and coping mechanisms related to stress among female students, highlighting the role of societal expectations, gender roles, and academic workload.

Numerous experts have found that one of the main causes of stress in girls is academic pressure. Due to self-imposed standards of perfection, cultural norms, and parental expectations, female students frequently endure higher levels of stress [8]. Similarly, girls are more likely than boys to absorb academic pressure, which results in more anxiety and lower self-esteem [9].

The study found that gender inequality in education across the socio-economic spectrum of India. She felt a need to develop female student's specific pedagogy and flexibility in the system of education, which would prepare them to face a world of opportunities and challenges [10].

Peer pressure and bullying are additional sources of stress for female students. A research [11], indicates that girls who experience bullying or social exclusion are more likely to suffer from depression and academic disengagement. The fear of being judged or ridiculed further exacerbates stress levels, particularly in competitive educational settings.

Prolonged academic stress can have severe consequences on both mental and physical health. A study [12] highlight the link between academic stress and health issues such as headaches, sleep disorders, and digestive problems among girls. Psychological effects, including anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem, are also prevalent among female students facing excessive academic demands.

Aims and Objectives of the Study

Present study was aimed to study importance and need of higher education to the girls students; to identify factors affecting girls higher education; to examine the view of parents of students and society about higher education for girls; to analyze educational development program of women through Government initiatives and schemes; to study the impact of challenges on the academic & personal front and to provide suggestions how to minimize and overcome from the problem

1. To identify common psychological health problems caused by educational stress among female students.
2. To examine the physical health issues linked to stress.
3. To understand the primary sources of educational stress.
4. To recommend strategies for reducing stress and improving overall well-being.

Research Methodology and study area

Research Methodology: A study was conducted among 660 female students enrolled in different educational levels, including Intermediate, Degree, B.Tech, M.Tech, and Postgraduate programs. The study areas are Rajanagaram Mandal of East Godavari District. Data collection was done through structured questionnaires and interviews. The methodology included:

- **Sample Size:** 660 girl students.
- **Data Collection Methods:** Survey, questionnaire and interview.
- **Statistical Tools Used:** Frequency, percentage and descriptive analysis.

Context of the study

Problems affecting development of higher education in girl students: There are some serious problems that girl students have to face to achieve higher education:

Gender discrimination at Home: The preference to boy's education is introduced first of all in the family. The girl is considered as uninvited and unwanted child, which is devoid of proper food, love and care in comparison to the male child. Girl's education is of secondary importance and not allowed to participate in any activity except the household chores. Hence girl's physical personal, social and emotional development is limited.

Educational Institutions: Next to home, school or college affects girl's higher education. Girls face the sex-bias in curriculum transaction, books, allocation of subjects, participation in activities etc. The biases for girl students are to be propagated in institutions, colleges and universities and quality of girl education does not match with that of educational, vocational and personal development.

In Society: Our society is strongly sex-biased and expectations of family, neighbors and other social groups from a girl is of traditional women, which is considered as subservient committed home maker, obedient daughter-in-law and sacrificing mother. She is expected soft spoken, shy, docile, tolerant to husband and his family for any kind of atrocities. The important causes of dropout in education are illiteracy, poverty, family structure, poor parenting, and more burdened higher education system.

Social Problems: Social attitude towards girl's education is generally negative and education for the girl is considered as unimportant practice of girls' responsibilities at home, pardah system, early marriage, lack of educational facilities at home, illiteracy of parents, male teachers in the school etc. are the hindrance factors for less development of girl's education [13].

Economic Problems: Money problem is so challenging and no one to feed the family and to educate the male wanted child. The parent have problem to afford for enrolment the girl child in school. There is problem to take care of siblings, perform household chores, earn and contribute to family income.

Educational Problems: The major educational problem is lack of institutions for higher education in the rural areas. There are no institutions and facilities available to the girl's education. Generally institutions are situated for men and far away from the village. Moreover, institutions do not have hostel facilities for girls. The girls are socially not prepared to join further education or training institution. As the educational status is directly associated to development of career but above mentioned problems affect and restricts the educational development of girl and hinders their career development. The girl students have many roles such as parents, spouses, employees, as compared to male student and experienced more pressure of financial, school responsibilities and child care [14]. Adult students have responsibilities such as employment, family, and other responsibilities of adult life [15]. Both sexes have difficulties juggling the role of student, worker, and family member [15]. The female students have a primary challenge to balance their multiple roles with the student role. They have great number of characters such as mothers, spouses/partners, employees, and community members [16]. Therefore, lifestyles of such students are broader and more complex than their traditional counterparts, and they have less time for extra school activities. The schools usually offered counselling for career to adult students from early time [17].

A number of services such as separate registration, advising, orientation, to offer more evening and weekend courses, special financial assistance, and to train faculty and staff. It is significant to train qualified staff to specially deal with female adult students since they confront barriers and challenges that differentiate them from male adult students [18]. Therefore, special assistance should be offered to girl students such as strategies in balancing family and school work. The universities and colleges also provide course or programs such as seminar courses for both male and female adult students. In this way, these students would have more opportunities to learn and acquire knowledge as well as skills during their study period and they may get a better preparation for their future study and campus lives. The commitments of different roles, lower level of self-confidence, insufficient support of family and society for female adult students may generate higher level of stress, anxiety others than male students as well as traditional counterparts. It may put these students at a higher risk for dropping out of school. Therefore, it is necessary for female adult students to build self-confidence and obtain external support. Adult learners are educated through their life experiences, which in turn bring values to their study and learning.

Findings, Results and Discussion

The increasing pressure of education has significantly impacted students, particularly girls, who face unique challenges that contribute to academic stress. Various studies have examined the causes, effects, and coping mechanisms related to stress among female students, highlighting the role of societal expectations, gender roles, and academic workload. The findings from the study are summarized in the following tables, followed by inferences and overall analysis.

Table 1: Distribution of Students from different Academic levels

| Academic Level | Number of Students | Percentage (%) |
|----------------|--------------------|----------------|
| Intermediate | 150 | 22.7 |
| Degree | 200 | 30.3 |
| B.Tech | 120 | 18.2 |
| M.Tech | 90 | 13.6 |
| Postgraduates | 100 | 15.2 |
| Total | 660 | 100 |

The table presents the distribution of students across different academic levels, highlighting that the majority (30.3%) are pursuing a Degree, followed by Intermediate students at 22.7%. Engineering courses also have a significant presence, with 18.2% enrolled in B.Tech and 13.6% in M.Tech, together making up 31.8% of the total. Postgraduate students constitute 15.2%, indicating that fewer students pursue higher studies beyond undergraduate levels. Overall, the data suggests a higher concentration of students in undergraduate programs (Degree and B.Tech) compared to postgraduate studies, with a total of 660 students accounted for in the dataset.

Generally girls tend to internalize academic pressure more than boys, leading to increased anxiety and decreased self-esteem.

Table 1: Academic Stress and Performance Expectations by Educational Level

| Factor | Number of Students | Percentage (%) |
|----------------------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| Parental Expectations | 400 | 60.6 |
| Fear of Failure | 350 | 53.0 |
| Competition with Peers | 300 | 45.5 |
| High Workload and Assignments | 280 | 42.4 |
| Pressure to Score High Marks | 370 | 56.1 |
| Balancing Academics & Family | 250 | 37.9 |
| Societal Pressure for Excellence | 320 | 48.5 |

The highest contributor to stress is parental expectations (60.6%), followed by pressure to score high marks (56.1%) and fear of failure (53.0%). Balancing academics and family responsibilities (37.9%) is also a considerable stress factor.

Table 2: Academic Stress by Educational Level

| Educational Level | Number of Students | Percentage (%) | Major Stress Factors |
|-------------------|--------------------|----------------|------------------------------------|
| Intermediate | 150 | 22.7 | Parental pressure, exams |
| Degree | 200 | 30.3 | Career uncertainty, workload |
| B.Tech | 120 | 18.2 | Competitive environment, deadlines |
| M.Tech | 90 | 13.6 | Research stress, job prospects |
| Postgraduate | 100 | 15.2 | Thesis work, financial burden |

Inference: Degree students (30.3%) report the highest academic stress due to career uncertainty and workload, followed by Intermediate students (22.7%), who face parental pressure and exam stress. B.Tech and postgraduate students experience stress primarily due to competitiveness and research work, respectively.

Table 3: Health Issues Related to Stress

| Health Issue | Number of Students | Percentage (%) |
|-----------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| PCOD/PCOS | 180 | 27.3 |
| Anxiety & Depression | 250 | 37.9 |
| Sleep Disorders | 210 | 31.8 |
| Headaches & Migraines | 190 | 28.8 |
| Digestive Issues | 160 | 24.2 |

Anxiety and depression (37.9%) are the most reported health issues caused by academic stress, followed by sleep disorders (31.8%) and headaches (28.8%). PCOD/PCOS (27.3%) is a significant concern among female students, indicating the impact of stress on hormonal health.

Table 4: Psychological Stress Analysis

| Psychological Issue | Number of Students | Percentage (%) |
|---------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| Exam Anxiety | 300 | 45.5 |
| Social Anxiety | 200 | 30.3 |
| Low Self-Esteem | 220 | 33.3 |
| Fear of Failure | 280 | 42.4 |
| Burnout | 190 | 28.8 |

Exam anxiety (45.5%) and fear of failure (42.4%) are the dominant psychological stressors. Low self-esteem (33.3%) and social anxiety (30.3%) highlight the emotional challenges faced by students, while burnout (28.8%) indicates prolonged exposure to stress.

Analysis

Educational stress is a growing concern among students, particularly girls, who often face immense pressure to perform well academically while balancing societal and personal expectations. This study aims to analyze the psychological, physical, and overall health problems faced by 660 female students from different academic levels due to educational stress. By understanding their struggles, we can identify the key stressors, their effects on health, and possible coping mechanisms to improve their well-being.

The study population consists of students from various academic backgrounds: Intermediate (22.7%), Degree (30.3%), B.Tech (18.2%), M.Tech (13.6%), and Postgraduate (15.2%). This diversity allows for a comprehensive assessment of how stress impacts students at different stages of their education. Each academic level presents unique challenges, ranging from exam pressure and coursework overload to career uncertainty and high expectations, which collectively contribute to their stress levels.

Psychologically, many students experience anxiety, depression, sleep disorders, and low self-esteem due to continuous academic pressure. The fear of failure, competitive environments, and the burden of meeting expectations often lead to emotional distress. Some students even develop social withdrawal tendencies, isolating themselves due to stress and performance-related concerns. The lack of mental health awareness and support systems further worsens these conditions.

Physically, students suffer from headaches, migraines, fatigue, digestive issues, and menstrual irregularities, all of which are linked to chronic stress. Long study hours, irregular sleep, and poor dietary habits contribute to exhaustion and decreased immunity. Additionally, back and neck pain, vision problems, and lack of physical activity due to excessive screen time and sedentary study routines further impact their overall health.

Several key factors contribute to educational stress among these students. High academic expectations, social and parental pressures, time management struggles, fear of failure, and limited emotional support are the primary triggers. Many students feel overwhelmed by the need to balance their studies, extracurricular activities, and personal life, leading to burnout. The lack of proper guidance and coping mechanisms further exacerbates these challenges.

To address these issues, educational institutions must implement mental health support systems, physical well-being programs, and stress management workshops. Encouraging counseling services, peer support groups, yoga, meditation, and balanced study techniques can significantly reduce stress levels. Additionally, promoting a healthy lifestyle with proper diet, sleep, and relaxation activities is essential for overall well-being. Schools and colleges should also conduct awareness campaigns to educate students on handling academic pressure effectively.

In conclusion, the study reveals that educational stress has a significant impact on the psychological and physical health of girl students across different academic levels. A holistic approach involving students, educators, parents, and mental health professionals is necessary to create a supportive academic environment that prioritizes both academic excellence and well-being. By addressing these challenges early and providing the necessary support, students can achieve academic success without compromising their mental and physical health.

Major findings of the study are as follows

- Academic Stress: High parental expectations and fear of failure are major contributors to stress across all educational levels.
- Health Impacts: A significant portion of students suffer from PCOD/PCOS, anxiety, and sleep disorders due to

- prolonged academic stress.
- Psychological Impact: Exam anxiety and low self-esteem are prominent concerns among female students, reflecting the pressure to perform.
- Vulnerable Groups: Degree and Intermediate students report the highest stress levels, requiring targeted interventions to manage workload and career-related uncertainties.

Conclusion

The study highlights the widespread nature of academic stress among female students and its impact on health and psychological well-being. Addressing these challenges requires institutional support, parental awareness, and access to mental health resources to create a more balanced academic environment for girls.

The study indicates that academic stress is prevalent across all levels, with Degree and Intermediate students experiencing the highest levels of stress. Common stressors include parental expectations, career uncertainty, and research pressure in higher education. Additionally, health issues such as PCOD, anxiety, and sleep disorders are common due to prolonged stress. Psychological stress, including fear of failure and low self-esteem, also significantly affects female students. The study highlights the extensive impact of academic stress on female students, affecting their psychological and physical well-being. The findings indicate that high parental expectations, fear of failure, and pressure to perform academically are significant contributors to stress. Health issues such as PCOD/PCOS, anxiety, depression, and sleep disorders further emphasize the toll of academic stress on students.

The study also shows that Intermediate and Degree students experience the highest levels of stress due to career uncertainty, workload, and societal expectations. Psychological stressors, including exam anxiety, social anxiety, and burnout, reveal the need for effective stress management strategies. To mitigate these challenges, institutions should implement counselling services, stress-relief programs, and a balanced curriculum that prioritizes students' mental health. Parental awareness and support play a crucial role in reducing unrealistic academic pressure. Encouraging a holistic education system that promotes emotional well-being, resilience, and time management skills can significantly improve students' overall well-being. Addressing these concerns is essential to ensure a healthier academic environment for female students, allowing them to excel without compromising their mental and physical health.

Recommendations

1. Mental Health Support: Establishment of on-campus counselling services.
2. Time Management Training: Workshops to help students prioritize and manage their academic responsibilities.
3. Stress Management Programs: Yoga, meditation, and physical exercise initiatives to improve mental resilience.
4. Awareness Campaigns: Educating students about recognizing stress symptoms and seeking help early.
5. Community and Inclusion Programs: Initiatives to promote inclusivity, combat discrimination, and build self-esteem.
6. Family Support Initiatives: Programs that provide support and counseling for students dealing with family or single-parent challenges.
7. School-based programs: Implementing stress management workshops, mindfulness practices, and peer support groups to equip students with healthy coping strategies.
8. Curriculum modifications: Adjusting academic schedules, workload, and assessment methods to reduce unnecessary stress.
9. Counselling services: Providing readily accessible mental health counseling for students experiencing significant psychological distress.
10. Teacher training: Educating teachers on the unique challenges faced by female students and promoting supportive classroom environments.
11. Parent counselling: Parental awareness and support play a crucial role in reducing unrealistic academic pressure. Encouraging a holistic education system that promotes emotional well-being, resilience, and time management skills can significantly improve students' overall well-being.

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