

Causes Of Academic Stress Among Students And Initiatives Taken By Various Stakeholders To Ease This Stress

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Abstract

The word stress is defined in many ways. Responses to environmental, psychological and sustainable changes and changes in life style are considered as stress. Now-a-days stress is becoming the part of our life. We all face many problems in our day to day life. These problems lead to us anxiety, depression and stress. Stress reduces our work efficiency as well as our performance at work place. Having being stressed a person always feels some sort of negativity and these negative thoughts affect his/her mental and physical health. We feel stressed where we have no solution for a faced problem. In that situation we may imbalance our life style and this becomes the result of excessive secretion of Adrenaline and Cortisol hormones. The increased quantity of these hormones affect our immune system and as well as the function of the heart. This leads to us a serious mental trauma. **United News of India** conducted a survey and it reveals that stress levels in India remain very high compared to other developed and emerging countries such as the USA, UK, Germany, France and Australia. The major causes of stress in our country today are work, health, and finance related issues. Although stress is common in all age group but it is more serious concern among the students. Our children are becoming the victims of stressed life at very early ages. Stress affects students' social, physical and mental health. According to **World Health Organization (1996)**, "Depression is among the leading causes of disability worldwide. Approximately 1 out of 75 people may experience panic disorder". This paper includes the cause of stress among students, studies related to stress and major initiatives taken by various stakeholders of our education system to reduce stress level among students.

Key Words:- stress, initiatives, anxiety, depression, sustainable change, mental trauma, stakeholders.

Introduction:-

"Your task is not to seek for love, but merely to seek and find all the barriers within yourself that you have built again." -Rumi

Stress among students is a raising concern in present scenario. It has also becoming a legal issue in many countries. Many studies regarding stress show that the inefficient management of time, life style, emotional weakness and ill mental health are the main causes of stress among students. They are not enough matured and thus they take wrong steps while they have stress or depression. This is really a major cause of a substantial loss to their family, society and organization. College students' academic stress refers to factors in the academic environment such as course work, group projects, and Organizational involvement, as well as perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors toward academic demands (**Wills, 2008**). **India Today** claimed in a survey data a large sample of US college students encountered with a high rate of multiple stresses which was linked to a great risk of suicide attempts and mental health problems. **Lin and Haung (2013)** conducted a study by surveying over 67,000 college students from over 100 college campuses about their stress, anxiety and depression. The researcher found that one in five students said that they had thoughts of suicide, while about one in 10 actually attempted it. This study really shows a serious concern how our future generation thinks about the life. This attitude of young generation may affect our sustainable development as human resources. In fact India has one of the highest rates of suicides among people aged between 15 and 29. The reasons behind this fact may be the

fear from the exam result, failure of examination, career disappointment or unemployment. A lot of suicidal cases come into light when the result of board exam has been declared. At that time we can hear the news of suicidal attempts taken by the students allmost every part of the country through the print and multimedia. The main cause of concern is the pressure from parents to do well in class-X or class-XII. All these stress among students are due to the burden of syllabus, unhealthy competition with others and due to the extreme desires of parents and relatives towards their children's outcomes of exams.

Definitely, these causes are raising concern in respect to social point of view. So, we must take urgent initiatives to overcome stress among our students. The system of our education is career oriented which pressurize our students towards better performance from others. The tendency of suicide increases when students do not get better opportunities of employment or when they do not find themselves to fit in the slot of their and their parents' aspirations. **Ministry of Human Resources and Development** has also declared that high stress among school students is actually a serious and raising concern for our modern society.

Present research paper reveals the major causes and concerns related to stress among school students. The objectives of the study are to find out the cause of stress and major initiative steps taken by various stockholders of our educational system to reduce the level of stress among school students. The present study is a systematic review. The main of the study was to give a wide outlook of literature related to stress. Some reviews have the statistical analyses related to the data gathered from different level to point out the stress level among students and some of the literary review provided us an analytical approach to unfold the different dimensions of stress. The researchers found that anxiety, academic stress and family related issues are the major determinants of stress among students.

Literature review:-

Studies show that rural areas' students are less depressed in comparison of the students of urban areas because they get much free environment to develop their actual personality. On the other hand students from urban areas spend their most of the time in watching television, playing video games and doing chatting in their mobile phones. Data from studies show that in rural areas the problem of stress among students is only 6.9% whereas in urban areas the percentage of these students is 13.5% which is approximately double. The reasons behind the differentiation of these data may be the standard of the family, size, environment and educational status of the family. Most of the families in urban areas are of nuclear type and both the parents are more educated than the parents of rural areas' students. More education, more chance to get the opportunities to find a job in their life. In urban areas both the parents are working and they do hard work to raise their life status according to the modern demand of the society. This condition leads them to a busy and hazardous life. They have no proper time to discuss with their children and to listen their problems. They have only demanding nature towards their children to get good marks in their exam. This demanding nature of parents' pushes their children into the mud of stress.

The data collected by **NCRS** show that around seventy thousands students from 2011-2017 do suicide due to the failure in examination. This is all because of the stressful environment of their home, school and society. We need to improve our mentality and say yes to a happy and joyful environment for our children. We need to encourage a healthy educational atmosphere and a healthy competition among students. We should motivate our children towards the basic concept of exams and make them understand that exams are not everything. Success and failure do not define us. **Morin, Amy** a famous psychologist says, "Parents do mistakes that destroy their kids' confidence and self esteem. As a parent we should not prevent them from making mistakes because if we prevent them from making mistakes it will rob them of the opportunity to learn how to bounce back. Tell your children that mistakes are the greatest teacher of their life. Each mistake gives them an opportunity to build their mental strength they need to do better next time. All parents need to help their children to identify their emotions which triggers them and they

should teach them how to self-regulate by doing so they will deal their emotions in a socially appropriate way in future. Kids who recognize their choices in life feel more confident in life feel more confident in their ability to create a better future for themselves. Parents should not comment their children for their misfortunes rather as a parent we should encourage them to take positive action. According to the author high expectations are healthy but expecting too much has its' consequences. When we expect high then our children do nothing. They might not even bother trying **Morin writes**, "Kids who are disciplined think, "I made a bad choice." Kids who are punished think, "I'm a bad person." **Hanson and Austin (2002)**, found that education-based initiatives that focus on increasing students skills and ability to cope with stress have been previously demonstrated to directly and positively influence educational achievement and decrease health risks. Academic-related stress is strongly related to decreased students' academic motivation (**Liu and Lu, 2011; Shinto,1998**). **S.Nayereh (2011)**, conducted a study on students' coping with stress at high school level particularly at 11th and 12th grade. The researchers found out the reasons of academic anxiety among students, analyzing these stresses and the coping strategies adopted by the students. They found that 26.1% secondary school students were distressed. Students were stressed to thought that they will not getting suitable place in educational system. They have too much syllabus to be learnt. Difficulty level of subjects take into considerations, too much homework and assignment work and tight time table gave them stress. **Mazumdar, Gogoi and others (2012)** studied on stress and its' contributing factors among the graduate and post-graduate students. They found out that there were different percentages of stress symptoms among the male and female students. Physical related problems were mostly seen in female. Out of 250 students, 60% of females and 40% of males were prone to the symptoms related to stress. **Waghachavare,V.(2013)**, and others have been assessed stress among students of various professional colleges and its association with various academic, social and health related factors. A cross sectional study was conducted September, 2011 to February, 2012 among students of medical, Dental and engineering colleges from the urban area of Sangli district of Maharashtra in India using a convenience sampling techniques and the sample size was 1200 college students. Out of the 1,224 respondents, 299(24.4%) experienced stress. Among them 115(38.5%), 102(34.1%) and 82(27.4%) were dental, medical and engineering students, respectively. There was a statistically significant association between stress and the field of education. Stress was observed in 187(27.7%) females and 112(20.4%) males. The women reported significantly higher stress levels than men ($p<0.05$). Students from all the three fields studied were exposed to stress. Academic factors were one of the most important stressors. Academic-related stress and burnout includes exhaustion, depersonalization, cynicism and inefficacy or reduced accomplishment (**Walburg2014**). **Bhargava and Trivedi (2018)**,found the causes of stress among youth. So, after identifying causes of stress among youth the researcher suggests that more emphases can be given to development stage of child into adolescence. They should be brought up in the positive environment. Understanding the sources of stress among them and how they can cope with the stress is very important. The researchers found that the stress mainly comes from academic tests, interpersonal relations, relationship problems, life changes and career exploration. Such stress may usually cause psychological, physical, and behavioral problems. More emphasis should be given to the outdoor activities and create hostile learning environment by minimizing the negative impact of stressors. The findings will help the individual students, scholars, lecturers, career and counseling centers. **Guadalupe,Gomez and others (2018)**, revealed a study of stress in high school students. The researchers used 335 high school students to identify the stress levels. They found that the main reasons of stress among students were examinations, selecting a career and their family related issues. These stresses responded by the students by listening music, share their problems with each other and doing exercises. **Reddy and Menon and Thatil (2018)**, studied on the academic stress and its sources among university students. In this study, the researchers had identified the dimensions of sources of stress such as personal inadequacy, fear of failure, interpersonal difficulties with teachers, teacher-pupil relationship and inadequate study facilities. **Pascoe, Hetrick and Parker (2019)**, had researched on the impact of stress on students in secondary school and higher education. The researchers reviewed many studies regarding stress and found high levels of academic-related stress, cross-culturally. The study found that academic-

related stress impacts their mental and physical health and leads to a range of academic problems. The ongoing stress relating to education has demonstrated negative impact on students' learning capacity, academic performance, education and employment attainment, sleep quality and quantity, physical health, mental health and substance use outcomes. This study showed that academic-related stress reduce academic achievement, decrease motivation and increase the risk of school drop-out. Longer term impacts reduced likelihood of sustainable development.

Initiatives Taken by Different Stakeholders to Ease Academic Stress of Students:-

To reduce exam stress many initiatives are taken by central and state government and by board of education. Central board of secondary education described exam stress as a psychological reaction. While having stress we feel under pressure, frustration and aggression. We feel tensed and unable to relax and do not concentrate at our task.

The CBSE has released a guideline for the students appearing in board exams:-

1. Students must know their span of concentration.
2. Group study method can be used to learn the difficult subjects.
3. Pointed out the weak areas of the subjects.
4. Management of time must be important.
5. Students can be take help from the other sources for learning by visualizing their study materials.

Further CBSE has also release a guideline for the parents to support their children while they are appearing in board exam:-

1. Parents should guide their children for proper planning. They should help them to organize their time table properly.
2. Children should be motivated by their parents during exam period.
3. They should give their children continuous emotional support.
4. Self-discipline, self-study habits and self-confidence should be developed in children.
5. Do not compare children with others.
6. Appraising children when they do well and when they do mistakes then parents should be need to understand their support to overcome from their mistakes.

The CBSE suggests 5 A's for controlling the exam stress:-

1. **Acknowledging:-** Accept the stress as inevitable. Acknowledge the stress.
2. **Appreciating:-** Students do not need to blame themselves for their failure. They should appreciate every steps of their life whether they are considered as failure or success.
3. **Alleviating:-** The pressure is about resorting to simple stress-busting techniques.
4. **Altering:-** Your lifestyle is the next step towards exam stress. Once you have seen the benefits of relaxation, it will encourage you to develop more permanent ways of reducing stress.

5. Avoiding:- Students need to avoid the situations which give them stressed or tensed life. They should be maintaining their happiness and should avoid the situations related to stress.

Initiatives Suggested in National Curriculum Framework:-

For reducing the stress among students, policymakers had also changed their prior view in NCF. They converted syllabus into learner centric and more flexible. Learners' autonomy is fully appraised. Teacher becomes the facilitators, supporters and they encourage learning. Learning in the classroom converts from passive reception to active participation of the students. Learning takes place in the wider social context. Knowledge should evolve and is created. Multidisciplinary educational approaches and divergent exposures should be used while teaching subjects at classroom.

According to NCF, 2005 documents these are some basic concern to reduce the stress of board exam:-

1. Shift from content based testing to problem solving and competency based testing.
2. Exam should be focus on analysis, evaluation and application.
3. Shift towards examinations of shorter duration with flexible time in which 25 to 40% is for short answer type questions and the remaining for well-designed multiple choice questions.
4. Students should be able to give their exam in their own or nearby school.
5. Permit students appear in as many subjects as they are prepared for and complete the board certification requirements within a three-year window.
6. Eliminate the terminology of 'Pass-Fail', indicate lack of adequate proficiency through re-examination or reappear.
7. Board should conduct re-examination immediately after announcement of results to enable students needing retake in one or two subjects to move to the next stage without losing a year.
8. Examination with a 'flexible time limit' can be effective way to reduce stress among children.
9. Guidance and Counseling be made available in schools to deal with stress related problems and to guide students, parents and teachers to lessen the students stress.
10. Subjects such as mathematics and English could be examined at two levels, standard and higher levels.

The Prime Minister of India **Mr. Narendra Modi** has started a program of "**Mann Ki Baat**" where he addressed the students before starting their board exam. In that program he talked about the stress regarding to board exam among students. **Chowdhury, S.Roy(2017)**, in her article described that the honorable Prime Minister advised students to reduce the pressure of exam by celebrating their examination like a festival. Further, during this program the PM said to the students, "Do not make these exams about pressure. Appear for them with a smile. Exams have nothing to do with life's success or failure."

Initiatives Taken by Government:-

1. Since 2005 **continuous and comparative evaluation [CCE]** program started to reduce the pressure of exam. In which the CBSE decided that the weightage division will be 80% will be board based and 20% will be internal based.

2. Board has also started the class-X board exam purely optional which means the students studying in senior secondary schools have the options to sit for the school based exam.
3. Government has started the no-detention policy where by schools cannot fail any child till class 8th under the right to education act, 2009.
4. Board has provided psychological counseling services to students at the time of preparation and exam to overcome the exam related stress.
5. CBSE directs schools to drop school bags till class-2nd. It has directed schools to ensure that students do not carry school bags till class-2nd and it also restricts the number of books included from class-1st to class-8th.

Maharashtra government issued a circular to the students regarding a yoga camp. The motive of the camp is "Perform yoga and obtain extra marks." This practice will relax the mind and body of the students and they would easily overcome from stress. **Uttarakhand board of education** has also taken a fresh step in this regard. The UA board is taking the help of teachers to prepare question banks of all subjects. This question banks will be distributed in all the schools of Uttarakhand which are affiliated by state government. Question papers will be prepared from the selected question banks. This will help the students to perform better in a short period of time without taking any stress. They can cover their most of the syllabus while preparing the selected questions from the question banks. Thus, they can get good marks without any burden of lengthy syllabus. In Uttarakhand many new programs have been launched to reduce the stress level of students. Bal Sakha program and Anandam are two such programs. SCERT is giving training to the teachers in the fields of Guidance and Counseling so that the teachers could be able to sort out the problems of the students. On the other hand Anandam is a program related to the happiness curriculum. The main concern of this program is to define our schools as the place of happiness for the students. A zero period from the daily school time table is prescribed for the students of class vi to viii. Students do yoga, concentration and many other creative activity during this zero period. This makes their schooling years stress free. Similarly, celebrating Pratibha Divas on every last Saturday of the month is an intervention to give the students a good start to their life to flourish their abilities and talents in a joyful way. Thus they can live their life without any dogma of success and failure (Hindustan news, 2018).

Mahatma Gandhi quoted, "Literary education is of no value, if it is not able to build up a sound character. By education, I mean an all-round drawing of the best in child and man in body, mind and spirit. So, the main purpose of education is to develop a happy life skill in students." So, keeping in mind this purpose, **The Delhi Government** has launched an initiative and introduced the "Happiness Curriculum" in schools. This new curriculum introduced our 1,000 Delhi government schools from Nursery to class-8th. It is totally based on human-centric education. This curriculum introduced activity based program with no examination. The curriculum is aimed regards self-awareness. It aimed to stimulate good mental health, character to prepare the students to face their life challenges and find the solution of these problems in efficient ways. It would help the students to reduce anxiety, depression and intolerance among students. By this government is expected to help the students to cope up with stress and learn for life, not for just a rank. This is a wonderful concept in promoting human values among students.

Conclusion:-

Almost all the studies about stress among students found that their exams were the major cause of stress. To reduce this stress, students need social support. They need to manage their study time. They also need counseling and vocational guidance because career choices are second greatest sources of

stress. According to American Psychological Association, "Stress is a top health concern for teens between 9th and 12th grade, psychologists say that if they do not learn healthy ways to manage that stress now, it could have serious long term health implications. Students must do adequate exercise to keep their physical and mental health fit." We must know the right way to handle stress in the classroom. Handling stress appropriately in class and at home can improve students' work efficiency and they can perform well without any fear of failure. Although government is running many programs as an interventional approach to ease students' academic stress though some responsibilities come into the part of parents and teachers. Parents should allow their children healthy diet. Relationship with family members is also important to overcome stress. Parents and teachers must give them proper motivation. Enthusiasm in student's life plays a vital role. It is teachers' and parents' duty to give them the education concerning moral values and their life skills. They should teach them the importance of life. Both parents and teachers should help the children to make a career choice according to their interest. In this regard counseling and guidance services can help parents and teachers to understand their children's capacity to choose their career well. Parents should not compare their children with others. Always keep in mind that every child is special. So, we should treat them accordingly.

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