



## **Subjective Well-being as related Academic Achievement and Academic Stress amongst Adolescents**

**Satvir Singh<sup>1</sup> & Anita Manglani<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Associate Professor, Department of Clinical Psychology, Faculty of Behavioural Sciences, Gurgaon, India.  
satvir\_fbs@sgtuniversity.org

<sup>2</sup> Assistant Professor, Department of Clinical Psychology, Faculty of Behavioural Sciences, Gurgaon, India.  
anita\_fbs@sgtuniversity.org

### **ABSTRACT**

*Transition from childhood to adulthood is mediated by adolescence. Adolescence is a stage filled with turbulence in the physiological and psychological aspects of personality. The still-growing and inexperienced mind of an adolescent is overwhelmed with a rapid rate of changes in one's physiological, psychological and social spheres of life. The cognitive, behavioural and affective aspects of an adolescent undergo a rapid transformation causing much strain and stress. Moreover, the pressures of studies emanating from higher achievement goals, put forth by parents and teachers, affect negatively the subjective well-being of adolescents. The study revealed that academic achievement is positively related to subjective well-being whereas academic stress had a negative correlation with academic achievement and subjective well-being.*

**Keywords:** adolescents, academic achievement, academic stress, well-being

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The march towards maturity becomes faster as one enters adolescence. Aspirations for a good career launch an adolescent into the cut-throat competition that is further aggravated by a search for self-defining personal values, and social roles necessary for attaining a sense of coherent self-identity. The multifaceted changes and challenges of the adolescent phase may precipitate various mental health problems particularly when a vulnerability is already existing owing to genetic and/or environmental factors [2-10]. Patil [13] reported that overwhelming pressures from family, school and peers accompany adolescence.

#### **Subjective well-being**

In general terms, subjective well-being is described as an individual's emotional reactions and cognitive judgments regarding the quality of his/her life experience. Emotions, moods and a person's assessment of his/her satisfaction with the various general and specific domains of his/her life are all the subject matter of subjective well-being. Dorian et al [4] notes that the term 'subjective well-being' covers a variety of ideas— reflective cognitive evaluations as well as affective reactions— which people have about themselves, their lives, life experiences, events, and circumstances. Given the circumstances characterized by the challenges of the adolescent stage itself and further compounded by the stress unleashed by academic pressure, the subjective well-being of adolescent students comes under constant pressure. Academic stress and academic achievement directly affect cognitive and affective aspects both closely involved in the physical and mental health of an individual. An adolescent's happiness, satisfaction and emotions come to be dependent upon his/her academic achievement as well as upon the level of stress experienced during the pursuit of academic goals [11, 7, 18-20].

#### **Academic achievement**

In the context of present circumstances academic achievement is considered as the most significant yardstick which determines a student's growth and development. This is a general attitude prevalent across all strata of society. The increasing application of science and technology in human life has made academic achievement the most valued objective of life. Such a perception regarding the importance of academic achievement in an individual's growth places it at the top among the priorities of life, and thus a crucial component of youth's overall growth. Being good at studies enables students to

adapt to adult life well and achieve occupational and economic success. Academic achievement describes academic outcomes. It is an indicator of the extent to which a student has achieved his learning goals. On the basis of obtained scores or rank in an examination, a student is categorized in a hierarchy with differing prestige, respect and worth. All this induces a strong pressure to excel in studies exposing an adolescent to a higher degree of academic stress threatening his/her subjective well-being [14, 16].

### Academic stress

Education has become exorbitantly demanding because of multiple reasons. This is exerting a force that hinders the smooth passage from childhood to adulthood. Amidst the soaring aspirations, fierce competition and ever-expanding curricular and extracurricular activities, adolescents are exposed to high levels of stress at a time when they have not yet acquired the skill sets necessary to deal with this type of situation. These sorts of circumstances are usually characterized by academic-related demands exceeding the adaptive capabilities of young students. The immature body and inexperienced mind are compelled to respond to these demands in maladaptive ways. In Indian conditions, this situation becomes more grave and complex because of the fast-shrinking opportunities for career building on the one hand and a burgeoning number of aspiring students on the other. Regular school hours are topped up with extra coaching which exacts a heavy toll on the physical and mental growth of young students. Often the expectations of parents exceed more than the abilities and potentials of the students. A better ranking in entrance exams is perceived as the gateway to success in career and life. This type of practice and attitude make students feel anxious and nervous. The cognitive appraisal by the students of his/her abilities and potential becomes distorted leading to feelings of frustration, lowered self-esteem, self-confidence and self-worth. Al-Ayadhi [1] has shown that academic stress induces significant neurohormonal changes at the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenocortical axis. Studies conducted by Dorian et al. (1982) and Jammot (1983) have proven substantial immunological dysregulation in adolescent students.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

### Objectives

- To study the relationship between subjective well-being and academic stress of the adolescents.
- To study the relationship between subjective well-being and academic achievement of the adolescents.
- To study the relationship between academic stress and academic achievement of the adolescents.

### Hypotheses

- H1 There would be a negative association between subjective well-being and academic stress of the adolescents.
- H2 There would be a positive association between subjective well-being and academic achievement of the adolescents.
- H3 There would be a negative association between academic stress and academic achievement of the adolescents.

### Sample

The study was conducted on a total number of 100 male adolescent students of class 12<sup>th</sup> in the age range of 16 years to 18 years. The sample was randomly drawn from various private senior secondary schools in the urban area of Bhiwani, Haryana. These students were from Science stream (non-medical) and came from middle SES families.

### Measures

The scores obtained by the students in 11<sup>th</sup> class were considered as measures of academic achievement.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Table 1: Pearson Product Moment Correlation showing the relationship among Academic Stress, Academic Achievement and Well-being.**

Variable	r	Significance Level
Academic Stress	-.13	.05
Academic Achievement		
Academic Stress	-.22	.05
Well-being		
Academic Achievement	12	NS
Well-being		

It is revealed from Table 1 that there is a negative correlation between subjective well-being and academic stress with a significance level at .05. Accordingly, H1 stands accepted. This finding is in tune with the results of previously conducted studies, e.g., Lesko & Summerfield [11], Wiles [18], Bilge and Saltuk [3]. The present design of education system specifically at senior secondary level with expensive curriculum, pressing time lines, frequent exams, coupled with demanding expectations of the parents etc. are usually seen as sources of academic stress. The prolonged experience of academic stress negatively affects the subjective well-being of students.

Regarding the relationship between subjective well being and academic achievement, Table 1 shows that both are positively correlated though not at significant level. H2 is supported by this finding. A similar nature of relationship has been reported by the studies conducted by Romen and Seeman [14], Leap [10], and Upadhyay [16].

Higher academic achievement is an important factor in enhancing an adolescent's self confidence, self esteem and self worth. Consequently leading to a better feeling of subjective well-being.

It is also seen from Table 1 that academic stress and academic achievements have a significant negative correlation. Hence H3 stands accepted. This finding corroborates the results of studies conducted by Sharma [15], Greenberg [7], Lesko and Summerfield [10] and Malik and Bald [12]. A moderated level of stress is helpful in enhancing the motivational level of a student leading to better performance. However, a relatively higher degree of stress hampers intelligent functioning hence resulting in a decrease in academic achievement.

### CONCLUSION

The negative correlation between subjective well-being and academic stress as obtained from the results of present study corroborates the findings of earlier studies. Academic stress adversely affects subjective well-being of students and eventually may cause a threat to physical and mental health of adolescents. Academic stress is also negatively associated with academic achievements highlighting the fact that negative impact of academic stress extends to all important areas of life. The positive relationship found between subjective well-being and academic achievement indicates that academic achievement has a bearing upon subjective well-being of the adolescents.

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