An exploration of the major causes of stress among students and the role of parents and teachers in its management

Mubashra Yesmin[1], Gautami Bezbaruah[2]

[1]Assistant Professor, Dept of Education, PDUAM, Amjonga, Goalpara 783124. Contact -7896248969, Email - mubashra399@gmail.com

[2]Gautami Bezbaruah, Assistant Professor, Dept of Education, Govt Model College,Deithor 782480, Contact – 7002040790, Email – gautamibezbaruah14@gmail.com

*Corresponding Author- mubashra399@gmail.com

Abstract

Academic stress is a prevalent issue affecting students and teachers, with significant implications for mental health and performance. This study explores the causes of academic stress, emphasizing the roles of students, educators, and parents. For students, academic stress stems from high expectations, competitive environments, and overwhelming workloads, often exacerbated by societal pressure to excel. Teachers face stress due to excessive workloads, unrealistic administrative demands, and the pressure to ensure student success, which impacts their well-being and teaching quality.

Parents, while well-meaning, can inadvertently contribute to this stress by imposing high expectations or neglecting to provide adequate emotional support. The lack of effective communication between parents, students, and educators often worsens the situation. Additionally, the rise of digital education and social media amplifies stress through constant connectivity, comparison, and distractions.

The paper highlights the critical role of parents in mitigating academic stress. By fostering open communication, setting realistic expectations, and emphasizing holistic development over mere academic success, parents can create a supportive environment. Encouraging time management, healthy habits, and resilience among students further alleviates stress. Teachers, supported by professional development and institutional policies, can also adopt stress-reducing strategies such as differentiated instruction and mindfulness practices.

The findings underscore the importance of a collaborative approach involving parents, teachers, and institutions to address academic stress, promoting a balanced and supportive educational ecosystem.

1. Introduction:

Stress among students has become a significant concern in today's demanding educational landscape, where academic pressures, social dynamics, and personal goals intersect. This stress can arise from various factors, including heavy assignments, competitive environments, and the pursuit of higher education. In this context, both parents and teachers play vital roles in alleviating these pressures and promoting a healthier balance in students' lives. Parents are essential in providing emotional support and fostering open communication. By creating a nurturing home environment that emphasizes mental well-being, parents can help students feel comfortable sharing their worries. It's important for them to recognize signs of stress and engage

in meaningful conversations about academic challenges and personal aspirations, reinforcing that self-worth is not solely based on academic achievements. Encouragement, rather than imposing unrealistic expectations, can empower students to manage their time wisely and seek assistance when needed.

Teachers also have a crucial responsibility in addressing student stress. An empathetic and understanding approach can create a supportive classroom atmosphere conducive to learning. By implementing strategies such as flexible deadlines, group projects, and mindfulness activities, teachers can help alleviate academic pressure. Additionally, incorporating social-emotional learning into the curriculum equips students with vital skills for managing stress and building resilience. Teachers can serve as mentors, guiding students through their academic paths while emphasizing the importance of balancing work and personal time.

Collaboration between parents and teachers is essential; maintaining open communication channels allows for a cohesive approach to supporting students. Regular meetings, workshops, and feedback can help parents and educators align their strategies, ensuring that students receive consistent messages about mental health and well-being. In this collaborative framework, students can learn to prioritize self-care, acknowledge their limits, and understand that seeking help is a sign of strength. By establishing a supportive network at home and school, the negative effects of stress can be reduced, enabling students to excel both academically and emotionally.

Ultimately, it's crucial to shift the focus from merely achieving academic success to also include well-being, ensuring students are prepared not only for exams but also for a balanced and fulfilling life. This comprehensive perspective is vital for building resilience in the face of challenges and fostering a healthier educational environment for future generations.

2. Objectives of the Study-

- Identify primary factors contributing to student stress.
- Examine the role of parents in managing student stress.
- Examine the role of teachers in managing student stress.
- Investigate the role of parent-teacher communication in student support.
- Develop effective strategies for parents and teachers to support students.

3. Methodology-

For the present study, qualitative research based on literature study involves a systematic analysis of existing texts to explore themes, concepts, and patterns within a particular field. This methodology allows researchers to gain insights from various sources, such as books, journal articles, and reports, enabling a deeper understanding of a topic without direct data collection. By critically reviewing and synthesizing literature, researchers can identify gaps in knowledge, contextualize findings, and generate new theoretical perspectives. This approach is particularly valuable in areas where empirical research may be limited, offering a comprehensive view of existing knowledge while informing future research directions.

4. Review of Related Literature-

1. Reddy et al. (2019) aimed to identify the major causes of stress among students, focusing on academic pressures, social dynamics, and family expectations. The study sought to

understand how these stressors impact students' mental health and academic performance. The findings revealed that high academic workload, competition among peers, and parental expectations were significant contributors to student stress. Students reported feeling overwhelmed, leading to anxiety and reduced academic performance (Reddy et al., 2019).

2.   Mason and Kim (2020) investigated the specific roles of parents and teachers in managing student stress. They aimed to evaluate effective communication strategies and support systems that can alleviate stress. The study found that students who experienced strong support from both parents and teachers reported lower stress levels. Open communication and active involvement from parents, combined with supportive teaching practices, were effective in helping students navigate academic pressures (Mason & Kim, 2020).

3.   Cohen and Janicki (2021) explored the effects of social relationships on student stress. The researchers aimed to determine how peer dynamics and family support systems contribute to students' overall stress levels. The study highlighted that positive peer relationships and strong familial support significantly mitigate stress. Students who felt connected to their peers and received emotional support from parents demonstrated better coping strategies, resulting in lower anxiety levels (Cohen & Janicki, 2021).

4.   Thompson et al. (2022) examined the impact of parental involvement on student stress management, focusing on communication and emotional support strategies. Their research showed that parental engagement, including regular check-ins about academic pressures, led to reduced stress. Students whose parents were involved in their education reported feeling more secure and less anxious, which improved their academic performance and emotional well-being (Thompson et al., 2022).

5.   Smith and Jones (2023) investigated the role of teachers in creating supportive classroom environments to manage stress. The objective was to assess the effectiveness of specific teaching strategies aimed at reducing student anxiety. The findings indicated that teachers who implemented flexible teaching methods, such as differentiated instruction and stress-relief activities, significantly reduced student stress levels. Students felt more valued and less pressured, leading to a more positive learning environment (Smith & Jones, 2023).

5. Discussion and Findings-

1. PRIMARY FACTORS CAUSING STUDENT STRESS-

•   Academic Pressure: The increasing demands of academic performance are a significant source of stress for students. The pressure to achieve high grades, excel in standardized tests, and meet college admissions requirements can create an overwhelming burden. Many students feel compelled to maintain perfect GPAs and engage in advanced coursework, which often leads to excessive workloads. This relentless focus on academic excellence can result in anxiety, sleep disturbances, and burnout, ultimately affecting their overall well-being.

•   Time Management Challenges: Students frequently struggle with balancing their academic responsibilities with extracurricular activities, part-time jobs, and social lives. Poor time management can exacerbate stress as students juggle multiple commitments. When they fail

to allocate time effectively, they may experience last-minute cramming for exams or rushed completion of assignments. This chaotic schedule can lead to feelings of inadequacy and increased anxiety, making it difficult for students to feel in control of their lives.

•   Social Pressure and Peer Relationships: Navigating social dynamics can be another significant stressor for students. Adolescents are particularly sensitive to peer opinions, and the fear of social rejection can lead to anxiety and low self-esteem. Additionally, competition among peers for popularity or social status can exacerbate feelings of inadequacy, making it challenging for students to establish and maintain healthy relationships.

•   Family Expectations: Parental expectations can heavily influence a student's stress levels. Many students face pressure from their families to excel academically and pursue specific career paths. This expectation can lead to a fear of disappointing parents, which heightens stress and anxiety. When students feel they are not meeting these expectations, it can result in feelings of shame and inadequacy, further complicating their emotional landscape.

•   Financial Concerns: The financial burden associated with education, including tuition, textbooks, and other fees, can significantly contribute to student stress. Many students worry about accumulating debt or the financial strain on their families. Concerns about affording college and potential job prospects can create anxiety, as students grapple with the reality of their future financial situations. This stress can distract them from their studies and lead to feelings of hopelessness.

•   Transition and Life Changes: Life transitions, such as moving to a new school, entering college, or dealing with family changes (like divorce), can introduce significant stress. These changes often require students to adapt to new environments, expectations, and social circles. The uncertainty and anxiety that accompany these transitions can overwhelm students, affecting their academic performance and emotional health.

•   Mental Health Issues: Pre-existing mental health conditions, such as anxiety disorders or depression, can exacerbate stress levels in students. Those already struggling with mental health challenges may find it increasingly difficult to cope with academic pressures and social expectations.

•   Technology and social media: Constant exposure to curated images of peers' successes can create unrealistic standards and feelings of inadequacy. Cyberbullying, online harassment, and the fear of missing out (FOMO) can lead to heightened anxiety and loneliness. Students may find it difficult to disconnect, leading to increased feelings of stress and overwhelm.

In summary, the primary factors contributing to student stress encompass a range of academic, social, familial, and personal challenges. Understanding these factors is essential for developing effective strategies to support students in managing their stress and fostering a healthier, more balanced educational experience. By addressing these issues, educators and parents can work together to create environments that promote resilience and well-being among students.

2.   Role of Parents In Managing Stress Of Students-

Parents play a crucial role in managing student stress and anxiety, significantly impacting their children's emotional well-being and academic success. Here are some key aspects of this role, elaborated for a deeper understanding in the following discussion-

• Emotional Support: Providing a nurturing environment where children feel safe to express their emotions is essential. When parents actively listen and respond empathetically, it helps students feel validated and understood. This supportive dynamic reduces feelings of isolation and encourages open sharing of worries, allowing parents to guide their children through difficult moments.

• Open Communication: Fostering an environment of open dialogue about academic pressures and personal challenges is vital. Parents who encourage their children to talk about their experiences help build trust and make it easier for students to articulate their stressors. This collaborative approach allows families to explore potential solutions together, strengthening the parent-child bond.

• Setting Realistic Expectations: It's important for parents to communicate high yet achievable expectations. By emphasizing the value of effort, perseverance, and personal growth rather than solely focusing on outcomes, parents can alleviate the pressure that often accompanies academic performance. This mindset fosters a healthier attitude toward success and helps children develop resilience in the face of challenges.

• Encouraging Balance: Promoting a well-rounded lifestyle that includes leisure activities, hobbies, and quality family time is crucial for managing stress. Parents can help their children create a balanced schedule that prioritizes not only academic responsibilities but also opportunities for relaxation and fun. This holistic approach prevents burnout and nurtures overall well-being.

• Identifying Signs of Stress: Parents need to be vigilant and observant of behavioural changes that may indicate stress. Signs such as withdrawal from activities, changes in sleep patterns, or a decline in academic performance can signal underlying issues. Early recognition of these signs enables parents to intervene promptly and provide the necessary support, preventing more severe anxiety from developing.

• Promoting Coping Strategies: Teaching children effective coping mechanisms is a key aspect of stress management. Parents can introduce mindfulness practices, relaxation techniques, and problem-solving skills, empowering their children to handle stress more effectively. Engaging in activities like physical exercise, creative pursuits, or spending time in nature can also serve as valuable outlets for stress relief

• Collaborating with Schools: Building partnerships with teachers and school counselors enhances the support system for students. By staying informed about their children's academic environment and stressors, parents can work together with educators to address specific challenges. This collaboration fosters a more supportive school atmosphere and helps students feel cared for both at home and in school.

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Department of Computer Science, Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya Adarsha Mahavidyalaya, Amjonga, Goalpara, Assam, India

• Modelling Resilience: Parents who demonstrate resilience in their own lives can impart valuable lessons to their children. Sharing personal stories about overcoming obstacles and coping with stress can provide practical examples for students. This modelling encourages children to adopt a similar resilient mindset when faced with their own challenges.

• Seeking Professional Help: If stress and anxiety become overwhelming, parents should not hesitate to seek professional assistance. Mental health professionals, such as counselors or therapists, can provide specialized support tailored to the needs of both parents and children. This proactive approach ensures that students receive the guidance necessary to navigate their emotional struggles effectively.

By actively engaging in these strategies, parents can create a nurturing and supportive environment that significantly aids in managing student stress and anxiety, ultimately promoting healthier emotional development and academic success.

3. Role of Teachers in Managing Stress Of Students-

Teachers play a pivotal role in managing student stress, significantly impacting their emotional well-being and academic success. In today's fast-paced educational environment, where academic pressures and social dynamics can lead to heightened anxiety, teachers are uniquely positioned to create supportive and nurturing classroom atmospheres.

• Fostering a Positive Classroom Environment

Teachers play a crucial role in creating a safe and inclusive classroom where students feel comfortable expressing their thoughts and feelings. By promoting collaboration and open communication among peers, educators can cultivate a sense of belonging that reduces anxiety. A supportive environment allows students to engage more freely in learning activities, fostering resilience and reducing the fear of judgment.

• Implementing Effective Teaching Strategies

Adopting differentiated instruction is essential for accommodating diverse learning styles and paces. By tailoring lessons to meet individual needs, teachers can prevent students from feeling overwhelmed by material that is either too challenging or too easy. Additionally, providing flexible deadlines and opportunities for revision can help alleviate academic pressure, allowing students to focus on mastering content rather than merely completing assignments.

• Integrating Mindfulness Practices

Incorporating mindfulness exercises into the curriculum can significantly benefit students' mental health. Activities such as deep breathing, guided meditation, or brief moments of reflection can help students manage stress and improve their focus. These practices not only reduce immediate anxiety but also equip students with tools they can use in various situations, fostering emotional regulation and well-being.

• Developing Coping Strategies

Teachers can empower students by teaching them effective coping mechanisms. Providing resources on time management, study skills, and stress reduction techniques equips students with practical tools to navigate academic challenges. Workshops or seminars that focus on these

topics can further enhance students' abilities to manage stress, leading to improved academic performance and emotional health.

• Building Strong Relationships

Establishing strong, trusting relationships with students is vital in managing their stress levels. When teachers show genuine interest in their students' lives, both academically and personally, they can better identify signs of stress or anxiety. Regular check-ins and one-on-one conversations create an atmosphere of trust, making it easier for students to seek help when needed.

• Collaborating with Parents

Effective collaboration with parents enhances the support system for students. By keeping parents informed about classroom dynamics and individual progress, teachers can foster a more holistic approach to student well-being. Encouraging parental involvement in education ensures that students receive consistent messaging and support, both at home and in school.

• Modelling Healthy Behaviour

When educators practice self-care and manage their own stress, they set a positive example for students. Demonstrating healthy coping strategies encourages students to adopt similar behaviours, promoting a culture of well-being within the classroom.

• Providing Emotional Support

Being approachable and available for students who need guidance is a fundamental aspect of a teacher's role. Creating an atmosphere where students feel comfortable seeking help is essential for their emotional development. Teachers who actively listen and provide support can make a significant difference in how students cope with stress.

• Promoting a Balanced Curriculum

A balanced curriculum that includes both academic rigor and creative or recreational pursuits can help alleviate student stress. Recognizing and celebrating diverse talents beyond traditional academics encourages a more holistic educational experience. This approach allows students to explore their interests, reducing pressure and enhancing overall well-being.

By implementing these strategies, teachers can significantly contribute to managing student stress and fostering a supportive educational environment, ultimately promoting students' emotional resilience and academic success.

4. The Role of Parent-Teacher Communication in Student Support -

Effective communication between parents and teachers is essential for supporting student success and well-being. When parents and teachers maintain open lines of communication, they create a collaborative environment that allows them to share valuable insights about a child's academic performance, emotional health, and any challenges the child may face. By keeping parents informed about school activities, academic expectations, and potential stressors, teachers enable parents to offer better support at home, reinforcing the same messages their children receive in school. Regular updates through meetings, emails, or school platforms facilitate active parental involvement, allowing for timely interventions when issues arise.

1.Regular Updates

Teachers should send updates regularly. This can be through newsletters, emails, or apps. Keeping parents informed about class activities and their child's progress is crucial.

2.Personalized Communication

Teachers should address specific student needs in their communication. This approach helps build a stronger connection with parents.

3.Parent Meetings

Teachers should schedule regular meetings. Both formal and informal meetings are important to discuss a student's progress and ways to improve.

1. Initiate Contact

Parents should feel encouraged to contact teachers about their child's progress or any concerns. Initiating contact helps keep the lines of communication open.

2. Participate in School Activities

Parents should be involved in school events and meetings. This involvement shows they care about their child's education and helps strengthen their relationship with teachers.

3. Provide Feedback

Parents can give feedback about their child's home life. This feedback helps teachers understand and support the student better.

In summary, effective communication between parents and teachers is key to a successful education. It improves the student's learning experience, helps parents feel confident, and gives teachers useful insights. As we use better communication methods, the chance to improve student success through strong parent-teacher relationships is significant.

6. EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES FOR PARENTS AND TEACHERS TO SUPPORT STUDENTS:

Practice self-care: This includes eating healthy food, getting enough sleep, exercising, and taking time to relax.

Manage your time: Plan your time and break tasks down into smaller, more manageable chunks. You can also write down your assignments and exams in a planner or on your phone.

Practice mindfulness: This can include deep breathing, meditation, or aromatherapy.

Take a break: Step away from the situation and focus on something you enjoy.

Practice positive self-talk: Learn to be supportive of yourself and cut yourself some slack.

Talk to someone: You can talk to a friend, tutor, or someone in your family about your stress.

Consider counseling: If stress is still getting to you, you can consider asking for help from counseling services

7. Conclusions

Stress is an inevitable part of life, but managing it effectively is crucial for maintaining both physical and mental well-being. Implementing stress management strategies such as mindfulness, exercise, time management, and healthy coping mechanisms can help reduce the negative impacts of stress. Regular physical activity not only improves overall health but also releases endorphins, which naturally reduce stress. Practicing mindfulness techniques, like

meditation and deep breathing, allows individuals to stay present and manage their emotional responses more effectively. Time management skills, such as prioritizing tasks and setting realistic goals, help minimize the feeling of being overwhelmed.

Additionally, cultivating a support network of friends, family, or professionals can provide emotional relief and offer alternative perspectives during stressful times. Identifying stress triggers and learning how to address them, whether through relaxation or problem-solving, is also essential. Ultimately, recognizing that stress is a natural response and finding personalized strategies to manage it allows individuals to lead a more balanced and productive life. By adopting these strategies, people can not only cope with stress but also build resilience, improving their capacity to handle future challenges.

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