



Influence of Peer Pressure on Academic Stress in the Context of Online Learning of Higher Secondary School Students

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ABSTRACT

Now society is giving much importance to achievement in various spheres which in turn throws the students into a world of stress. In this pandemic period everybody finds stress everywhere, whether it be within the family, school/educational environments, or any other social or economic sector. Students today are facing new challenges in education calling for greater effort to be put into them. Also, society demands students to perform various roles, which are unspecific and undefined, inconsistent and unachievable in the present socio-cultural, economic, and bureaucratic contexts of our society, causing heavy stress on students mainly from higher secondary schools. In the present study, the investigator made an attempt to find out the relationship between academic stress and peer pressure in the context of online learning of higher secondary school students. The study is conducted on 198 students studying in government and aided higher secondary schools in Kerala. Data required for the present study were collected through a survey. The standardized tools used for the study are the Scale of Academic Stress in the context of online learning (Bindu 2020) and the Scale of Peer Pressure in the context of online learning (Joy and Bindu 2020). The study found that there is a significant positive correlation between academic stress and peer pressure of higher secondary school students in the context of online learning. The reasons behind academic stress and peer pressure need to be identified and support to students may be provided when they are in need in the form of guidance and counseling. If needed academic scaffolding is also to be provided. The teachers should also be provided with sufficient in-service training to understand the problems of higher secondary school students during online teaching.

INTRODUCTION

Education is the overall development of an individual's brain through proper interaction with the environment. The teacher is one who provides a suitable environment for this change. At higher secondary school level students are in the burning adolescent period and the teacher needs to 'handle' them very carefully. When the students are in the real classroom and school environment teachers are getting the opportunity to observe them directly and understand them. The teachers can deal with the subject along with considerations to the individual difference. When the teaching got turned into online mode due to the Covid-19 pandemic everything went upside down. Many factors like facilities, feeble network connections, non-availability of smartphones, etc lead to digital divides in a class. As the students are away from their peer group, they are feeling general stress. It needs to be addressed properly. As they were in their age of future planning with respect to their achievement, their parents and teachers are stressing them to achieve high. Academic stress among higher secondary school students has been raised due to these reasons.

Stress is a mental status that is hard to avoid. Stress is defined as burdens, pressures, anxieties, and worries felt by an individual. Everyone has had it or has it at one point in their life time. It was believed that the student population was the least affected by any sort of stress or problems. Stress is now understood as a lifestyle crisis affecting any individual regardless of their developmental stage (Masih & Gulrez, 2006).

Academic stress is mental distress with respect to some anticipated frustration associated with academic failure or even unawareness of the possibility of such failure. Depression, anxiety, behavioral problems, irritability, etc. are a few of the many problems reported in students with high academic stress (Deb, Strodl & Sun, 2015). Causes of academic stress on students may include environment, co-curricular activities, parental pressure, peer pressure, etc.

Peers have a key role in every student's life. The preference in the way of dressing, speaking, using illicit substances, sexual behaviour, adopting and accepting violence, adopting criminal and antisocial behaviours, and in many other areas of the adolescent's life were normally decided by the peers or by their influence (Padilla, Walker & Bean, 2009). For example, alcohol consumption is usually started due to peer influence and is related to social events, which usually take place in peer groups, namely; drinking makes holidays more fun. Introduction facilitates approaching others; it helps relax or facilitates sharing experiences and feelings (Kuntsche, Knibbe, Gmel & Engels, 2005). On the other hand, in situations friends allow to share experiences and feelings and to learn how to solve conflicts. Not having friends can not be encouraged as it leads to social isolation and limited social contacts, as there are fewer opportunities to develop new relations and social interactional skills. The psychological well-being of adolescent students mainly depends on their involvement in friendship (Ueno, 2004). Stronger friendships may provide adolescents with an appropriate environment to develop in a healthy way and to achieve good academic results. Vaquera & Kao (2008) found that adolescents with reciprocal friendships show high levels of feelings of belonging in school and at the

same time, reciprocity and feelings of belonging have positive effects in academic results. Peer pressures have magical power in the academic life of higher secondary school students.

Need and significance of the study

In past decades, the growth of the internet has influenced our education system. The live pandemic COVID-19 altered our lives rapidly and dramatically and was beyond expectation. During the Pandemic of COVID -19, the traditional education system is completely shifted into the online platform. As per the decision taken by the government to prevent the spread of covid-19 schools got shut down all across the world. Globally, over 1.2 billion children are out of the real classroom. This leads to a dramatic change in the teaching-learning process in the schools. This situation gave rise to possibilities and implementation of e-learning, whereby teaching is undertaken remotely and on digital platforms. While the safety of students and teachers is of the utmost importance, online learning may influence the mental health of teens.

In online learning platforms integrative online facilities are used by the teachers, learners, and others involved in education with information, tools and resources to support and enhance education delivery and management. Online learning affects the educational sector from young children to young adults, teachers, and professors. For many, students are facing mental health disorders due to this online teaching-learning where there is no direct human contacts with their peers and teachers. For others, the impact of the pandemic and online learning can trigger new changes in mental health and mood. Social isolation, increased stress and anxiety, virtual learning fatigue are some of the ways teens are most affected by online learning.

Peers are people who are equal in such respects as age, education or social class, group, etc. They can be called friends. Mainly two forces are exerted from peers one is named as Peer Pressure and other is Peer Influence. Peer pressure is a forcible action. Peer influence is a persuading/influencing action. We might hear the term 'peer pressure' used a lot. But peer influence is a better way to describe how teenagers' behavior is shaped by wanting to feel they belong to a group of friends or peers. They are not pressurized, they are gradually influenced by seeing their friends being in a group they wish to belong to and let what they do grow on them. So Peer influence is when you choose to do something you wouldn't otherwise do, because you want to feel accepted and valued by your friends. It isn't just or always about doing something against your will, but also against your belief, against your standard, against your values just because you want to belong. It's expected that one will experience peer pressure frequently throughout their teen years and it is inevitable. Teenage age happens to be the age we want to feel among, we want to belong and we are tirelessly looking for where we can belong.

Studies by Kadir, Atmowasdoyo & Salija (2018) have shown that peer group members can boost the anxiety of group members especially pertaining to their education. Peer pressure faced by many teenagers of the society, professionals understood the concept of peer influence that could affect teenagers in a negative way which can be prevented by educating and preparing teenagers to face the negative aspects caused by

peer pressure (Temitope & Ogonsakin, 2015). Similarly peer influence among teenagers does not directly affect them in a negative way but it varies in how much and how the students receive the climate of the peers coming from the group (Mosha, 2017). When a student is influenced and motivated by peers, he will perform excellent at school and get good grades in mathematics (Boechnke, 2008). Getting the support needed coming from the peer group, student tend to excel and exceed its capability and concentrate more pertaining to his studies and do good in the academic tasks in school (Olalekan,2016).

Because of the above the investigator felt a strong relationship between academic stress and peer pressure and decided to find the relationship between academic stress and peer pressure of higher secondary school students in the context of online learning.

OBJECTIVE : To find out the relationship between academic stress and peer pressure of higher secondary school students in the context of online learning.

PROCEDURE OF STUDY

Normative survey method was used for the present study. The study population was Higher secondary school students studying in government, aided and unaided schools and attended the online classes during COVID pandemic time. A sample of 198 students were selected. The study used standardized tests (i) Scale of Academic Stress in the context of online learning (Bindu 2020) and (ii) Scale of Peer Pressure in the context of online learning (Joy and Bindu 2020) along with a general data sheet. The obtained data were analyzed by using Descriptive Statistics and Karl Pearson's Product Moment Correlation.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

To find out the relationship between academic stress and peer pressure of higher secondary school students in the context of online learning, product moment coefficient correlation between the scores of academic stress and peer pressure of higher secondary school students was used. The details of value of coefficient of correlation between academic stress and peer pressure of higher secondary school students in the context of online learning is given in the Table below:

Coefficient of correlation between academic stress and peer pressure of higher secondary school students in the context of online learning

Variables correlated	N	Value of r	Level of significance	Confidence interval	Percentage variance
Academic stress × Peer pressure	198	0.61	0.01	0.53 to 0.69	37.21

The value of coefficient of correlation between academic stress and peer pressure of higher secondary school students in the context of online learning is 0.61. The value is higher than the value set for 0.01 significance level. Hence the obtained coefficient correlation is highly significant. This shows that there is significant positive correlation between academic stress and peer pressure of higher secondary school students in the context of online learning. It indicates that any increase or decrease in academic stress will be followed by a proportionate increase or decrease in peer pressure of higher secondary school students in the context of online learning. In other words, there exists an influence of peer pressure on academic stress of higher secondary school students in the context of online learning. The percentage variance shared between academic stress and peer pressure of higher secondary school students is 37.21. That is nearly 37% variance of Peer Pressure is attributable to the variance in Academic Stress of higher secondary school students.

Conclusion

The investigators could find a relationship between academic stress and peer pressure of higher secondary school students in the context of online learning. The result shows that there exists significant positive relationship between academic stress and peer pressure of higher secondary school students in the context of online learning. This indicates academic stress and peer pressure move in same direction. This means that when peer pressure increases academic stress also increases, or when peer pressure decreases academic stress decreases. The shift from offline mode to online mode made the students in the higher secondary schools in many ways as the adolescent group of students mostly influenced by peers. The students are keeping away from their direct contact at school premises. The students are getting chances to meet and interact with their peers only through online modes. Higher secondary is the terminal year of school education and they are expected to face many competitive examinations. As the classes were completed through online mode and also through group discussions the peer influence on achievement was initiated. This may be the cause of academic stress among students. The investigators would feel gratified if the findings of the present study would lead to a better understanding of the importance of relationship between academic stress and peer pressure in the context of online learning.

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