



Effectiveness Of Bibliotherapy On Academic Stress Among Students: A Review

Ritika Tandon(PG Tutor), Parul Sharma(PG tutor), Ashma Sharma(AssistantProfessor)
Department of Mental Health Nursing, SGT University, Gurugram, Haryana, 122505

ABSTRACT

Stress is sum of emotional and physical tension that is experienced by all in our modern society. Stress occurs when an individual fails to respond to any perceived or existing threats which can be physical or emotional. There are various sources of Indian education system, unpleasant emotions, pressure from parents, heavy academic workloads, negative relationship between teachers and students. The impact of academic stress on students are in the form of physical, psychological and academic performance. Various therapies are used for helping the students to deal with academic stress such as Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) or talk therapy, Solution- focused therapy, Problem-solving therapy, Life coaching, Meditation, relaxation and Yoga. Recently Bibliotherapy is gaining popularity as it is cost effective and easy to implement among students at any setting.

Key words: Stress, Academic stress, students, Bibliotherapy

INTRODUCTION

Stress is sum of emotional and physical tension that is experienced by all in our modern society.¹ Stress occurs when an individual fails to respond to any perceived or existing threats which can be physical or emotional. Stress places a demand on an individual's body and mind which they are unable to fulfill. Stress for a short duration of time can have a positive impact on a human body as it gives a boost to avoid danger but if it sustains for a longer time, then it proves to be hazardous for an individual's physical and mental well being.²

Sources of stress is known as stressors which are situations or events that interferes with daily functioning of an individual and disrupts their well-being which forces them to make adjustments.³ Stressors can be environmental changes, daily events, major life changes, demanding workplace, social demands or substance abuse.⁴ However, stress differ from person to person as what one individual may find stressful

, it may not be for another.³ Individuals face acute stress at one time or another which lasts for short duration of time. The stress which lasts longer than a week or months is called chronic stress which has an negative impact on physical and mental health if not resolved timely.²

In modern era, stress has become an inevitable part of student's life as they have to carry various academic and social burdens on their shoulders. Since ages, it's a myth that students are not influenced by any type of problems or stress as they are just expected to study and studying is not stressful. But the crushing weight of their parents hope, which just grows larger until it becomes difficult for students to carry.⁵ Students deteriorating under the effect of stress can be seen all over the world but India has one of the highest prevalence rate of suicide among students aged between 15 and 29. Even though, the causes are countless but few of the common reasons are facing unemployment, examination, depression and intense demands from parents.

Many incidents have come to surface where students are drawn to such mental anguish that they end up taking their lives during exams or on the day of result.⁶

Sources of Academic stress

1. **Indian Education System:** is more inclined towards memorization which requires long systematic study hours which leaves nearly no time for leisure activities for proper development of a child. Students are offered colleges for further education on the basis of their performance in 12th grade, from which some students fail to acquire colleges which leads to hopelessness and worthlessness among students. Science stream students are further pushed into fierce competition by giving entrance exams for different universities and colleges.⁶ Social status and future of students are decided by the grades or marks obtained by them in their tests or examination which leads to academic stress. Due to rigid evaluation system, students limit their scopes to excel to live up according to pre set social life.⁷
2. **Unpleasant emotions:** like fear do not last longer but if they do in life of students or if they reach excessively high levels then it manifests in mental and physical turmoil.⁸ Due to fear of failure in exam students often do not take initiative in pursuing activities.⁹ Pessimistic thinking regarding the examinations leads students to underestimate their abilities, or to overthink about the consequences of their failure which leads to anxiety and further worsening of their performance.¹⁰
3. **Pressure from parents:** Growing expectations of parents coupled with academic pressure has led to increased stress levels in today's students are leaving them vulnerable to severe depression and suicidal tendencies.¹¹ High parental expectation leads to negative effect in terms of giving more stress and anxiety to students.¹² Unrealistic high goals set by parents for their children, often leads to outbursts by students in various form such as stress, depression and even suicides.¹³ Parents often push their children in cut throat competition and to outshine their competitors so that they can enhance their social status in society.¹⁴
4. **Heavy academic workloads:** along with pressure to meet another deadline among students puts them under immense pressure which may lead to breakdown of their body and mind.¹⁴ It has been seen that students studying in private schools feel more pressurized as compared to government schools due to never ending homework with academic related assignments which keeps piling on the students.¹⁵ Due to vast course content being covered in their academics along with unreasonable academic overload, students often fail to keep up with such demands which causes stress.¹⁶
5. **In classroom teaching,** teacher and students influence each other which can be positive or negative.¹⁷ Stress, aggression and anxiety is caused among students by negative relationship between teacher and students.¹⁸

Impact of Academic stress on Students

1. **Physical:** Prolonged academic stress leads to muscular tension, headache, backache, indigestion, disturbed sleeping pattern and many more symptoms among students.¹⁹ Mostly students experience body pain due to prolonged tensed up muscles while dealing with stress. Digestive issues such as stomach aches, diarrhoea and constipation are common complaints among students. Sometimes, academic stress becomes too hard for students to bear that it leads to nausea and vomiting. High intensity of academic stress interferes with student's normal sleep pattern leading to increased secretion of stress hormone in their body. An increased cortisol level in body has negative impact on memory, blood glucose regulation and metabolic rate.²⁰
2. **Psychological:** When stress is not manageable for students, it may lead to negative thinking in them which leads to decreased academic performance.²⁰ Students who already suffer from depression or anxiety, get worse when exposed to unbearable academic stress.²¹ When students are unable to deal with increasing academic stress, to escape they may start substance abuse which impairs their overall health and well being. Poor quality of life, depersonalization and burnout are common consequences of academic stress.²²

3. Academic Performance: Students experience academic stress which leads to reduced motivation that hinders their academic achievement and may lead to increased drop out rates.²³ Higher the level of academic stress, lower will be the academic achievement as student's performance, grades and involvement in class decreases. Unable to deal with increasing academic stress, students often drop out to escape from tasks or works expected out of them.²⁴

Management of Academic stress

Various therapies are used for helping the students to deal with academic stress such as Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) or talk therapy, Solution-focused therapy, Problem-solving therapy, Life coaching, Meditation, relaxation and Yoga.²⁵ Recently Bibliotherapy is gaining popularity as it is cost effective and easy to implement among students at any setting.

Bibliotherapy also known as book therapy or therapeutic storytelling is a brief self help intervention which requires an individual to read specific texts. This therapy uses an individual's relationship to the content of poetry or books as therapy. Bibliotherapy has shown to be effective among students as it teaches students to solve their problems, to cope with various issues such as mockery, name calling, sexuality changes, fear, anxiety and death.²⁶ Students often relate themselves to the characters in books who undergoing similar challenges and develop a sense of belonging, resilience and positive emotions. Students can learn that how the characters are coping with challenging circumstances and channel their negative emotions into positive.²⁷

Students may find it difficult in identifying and communicating their feelings but by reading books, they might gain insight into issues they may be experiencing such as separation, death, poverty, illness and many more. Gaining insight leads to release of pent up feelings, formulation of goal directed behavior and new ways of communicating with others.²⁸ Students who face academic stress have benefited from bibliotherapy as they feel calm, comfortable and a sense of security.²⁹ A significant decrease in stress, anxiety or perceived stress and an increase in quality of life was seen among college students after implementation of ten weeks of mindfulness-based stress reduction bibliotherapy.³⁰ A significant reduction of stress due to schoolwork, interpersonal relationship, career planning and financial issues was seen among students as a result of bibliotherapy so it was suggested to be used by educational and health professionals as way to cope with stress.³¹

Four Stage Bibliography

Four stage of bibliotherapy involves students to do identification, catharsis, insight, and universalization with a character or theme in a story.

1. Identification/Recognition: **In this stage, students make a text to self connection, where they can relate to the plot or character in the book. When participants develop such a connection with the story then they have entered first stage of bibliotherapy.**
2. Catharsis/Examination: The word "catharsis" is Greek for "cleansing". It helps in purging strongly held feelings from inside to outside. In this stage, students identify their bottled up emotions and release it as the story or dialogues helps in sparking an emotional release.
3. Insight/Juxtaposition: This stage requires guidance where teachers and parents come into play. It requires mental effort where students have to put two storylines (your life and characters life) together for comparison. An optimistic environment is required to do so and to be done under influence of positive and open minded persons.
4. Universalization/Self-Application: After gaining insight into story and self, students can integrate the positivism, problem solving, self importance and other morals from story to their lives.³²

Conclusion

One of the most successful forms of therapy for lowering student stress is bibliotherapy. It offers numerous advantages that, reduce stress by promoting calm, comfort, and an increased sense of security. The educational curriculum should contain bibliotherapy so that students are aware of it and can use it when they are struggling. So that it may be used in educational institutions, teachers need to receive bibliotherapy training.

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