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Stress Among Secondary School Students with Respect to Their Locale and Emotional Intelligence

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Abstract
The purpose of this study is to assess the status of stress among secondary school students with respect to their locale and emotional intelligence. For this, descriptive research under survey technique was used. Total sample of 1100 secondary school students were selected through incidental sampling technique. The data were collected with the help of two standardized tools i.e. Students Stress Scale by Akhtar (2011) and Emotional Intelligence Scaleby Singh and Narain (2014). The collected data were analyzed using the statistical method of analysis of variance (Two-way). Results of the study revealed that there exists no significant area-wise difference in secondary school students. The result inferred that secondary school students possessing different level of emotional intelligence did not differed significantly from each other with regard to their stress. Further, the study also revealed that area and emotional intelligence interacted significantly with respect to stress of secondary school students. The educational implications have been discussed at the end of the paper.

Keywords: Stress, Locale, Emotional intelligence

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a critical stage of development marked by significant physical, emotional, and social changes. During this phase, secondary school students often experience increasing academic pressure, social expectations, and future-related uncertainties. These challenges can lead to heightened levels of stress, which, if not managed effectively, may negatively impact their mental health, academic performance, and overall well-being. Stress has become an increasingly common issue among secondary school students in today's competitive and fast-paced world. It refers to the body's response to any demand or pressure, and while a certain level of stress can be motivating, excessive or chronic stress can have adverse effects on a student's mental, emotional, and physical health. The secondary school stage, typically involving students aged between 13 and 18 years, is a crucial period of development, where adolescents face multiple academic, social, and personal challenges. The pressures of examinations, high expectations from parents and teachers, peer pressure, career concerns, and the struggle to maintain a balance between school and personal life are some of the key sources of stress for students. This stage also coincides with adolescence a time of hormonal and emotional changes which can further intensify their vulnerability to stress. If not managed properly, stress can lead to anxiety, depression, low self-

esteem, sleep disorders, and even poor academic performance. Addressing stress in secondary school students is essential for fostering a healthy and productive learning environment. Early identification, emotional support, life skills education, and stress management strategies can help students develop resilience and cope more effectively. This calls for collaborative efforts from schools, families, and mental health professionals to promote the overall well-being of students. Emotional intelligence (EI) plays a vital role in the personal, social, and academic development of secondary school students. Defined as the ability to recognize, understand, manage, and express emotions effectively, emotional intelligence enables individuals to build healthy relationships, make responsible decisions, and cope with stress and challenges in a constructive manner. For adolescents navigating the critical period of secondary schooling, emotional intelligence becomes especially important, as it directly influences their behavior, motivation, mental health, and academic performance. Secondary school students are at a stage of rapid emotional and social development. They often face increasing academic demands, peer pressure, identity exploration, and future uncertainties. In such a transitional phase, the ability to manage emotions and interact positively with others is essential for maintaining psychological well-being and achieving success. Students with high emotional intelligence are generally more self-aware, empathetic, and able to handle conflict and pressure, which contributes to better academic outcomes and stronger interpersonal relationships. Fostering emotional intelligence in secondary school students is therefore not only beneficial but necessary. Schools can play a key role by integrating social-emotional learning (SEL) into the curriculum, training teachers to model emotionally intelligent behavior, and creating a positive and inclusive atmosphere that encourages emotional growth. By developing emotional intelligence, students are better prepared to face academic challenges and grow into emotionally healthy, responsible, and successful individuals. Several studies have indicated that stress levels among students have risen over the years, prompting educators, parents, and policymakers to recognize it as a serious concern. Moreover, the impact of stress can vary based on individual differences such as gender, personality, coping skills, social support, and environmental factors. The school environment, teaching style, parental involvement, and socio-economic background also play significant roles in determining how students experience and deal with stress. Understanding the interplay between locale, emotional intelligence, and student stress is vital for developing effective support systems and educational strategies. This study aims to assess the status of stress among secondary school students in relation to their locale and emotional intelligence, providing insights that can guide interventions for improved mental health and academic success. **Senthil and Jayaraman (2016)** explored the relationship between emotional intelligence, test anxiety, and academic stress among university students in India. The study aimed to understand how emotional intelligence helps students manage stress in high-stakes testing environments. Findings revealed that students with higher emotional intelligence experienced lower levels of test anxiety and academic stress, while female students reported higher test anxiety than males. The study recommended introducing programs to enhance emotional intelligence as a strategy to reduce academic stress and support student well-being. **Salavera et al. (2017)** examined the relationship between emotional intelligence, social skills, and self-efficacy among secondary school students in Spain using a cross-sectional descriptive correlational design. The study found moderate to strong positive correlations between emotional intelligence, social skills, and self-efficacy, with no significant gender differences across the variables. This indicated that self-efficacy was similarly influenced by emotional intelligence and social skills for both boys and girls. **Alam (2018)** investigated the emotional intelligence of adolescent students using a descriptive survey method. The results revealed significant

differences based on school type and gender, with private school students and girls scoring higher than others. However, no significant difference was found between rural and urban students. The study concluded that school type and gender influence emotional intelligence, while area of residence does not**. Kumar (2020)** studied emotional intelligence among higher secondary students in Nagapattinam district, Tamil Nadu. Findings showed that most students had average emotional intelligence, with no significant differences based on subject stream, locality, family type, father's occupation, or income. However, female students scored higher than males. **Halimi et al. (2021)** examined emotional intelligence and academic achievement among Kuwaiti undergraduates. The study found strong positive associations between self-emotion appraisal, use of emotion, and GPA. Other emotional intelligence dimensions had no significant impact. **Geetha and Sharath (2023)** studied emotional intelligence among secondary students in Karnataka. Most students showed high emotional intelligence, with girls in urban schools scoring significantly higher than boys, while no gender difference appeared in rural schools. **Harshini and Padmalakshmi (2025)** indicated that there was a weak negative correlation between the variables. Also, the research provided an understanding of the importance among students to focus on and develop their grit level to cope with their perceived stress level.

Objectives of the Study:

1. To study area-wise differences in stress among secondary school students.
2. To study the difference in stress among secondary school students with regard to their level of emotional intelligence.
3. To study interaction between area and emotional intelligence with regard to stress among secondary school students.

Hypotheses of the Study:

1. There will be no significant area-wise differences in stress among secondary school students.
2. There will be no significant difference in stress among secondary school students with regard to their level of emotional intelligence.
3. There will be no significant interaction between area and emotional intelligence with regard to stress among secondary school students.

Methodology

In the present study, survey technique under descriptive method was employed to achieve the objectives of the study.

Sampling

The data were collected from four districts of Himachal Pradesh: Kullu, Mandi, Bilaspur, and Shimla. The study included a total sample of 1100 secondary school students by employing incidental sampling technique.

Research Tools Used

In the present investigation, the data were collected with the help of Students Stress Scale by Akhtar (2011) and Emotional Intelligence Scale by Singh and Narain (2014) were used. The collected data were analyzed using the statistical method of analysis of variance (Two-way).

Analysis of Data

In order to know the main effects of area and emotional intelligence level, as well as their interactional effect on the stress levels of secondary school students, a 2x3 factorial Analysis of Variance (Two Way ANOVA) was performed. The design incorporated two area categories (urban and rural) and three levels of emotional intelligence (high, moderate and low), applied to the students' mean stress scores. The means and standard deviations of stress scores across area and emotional intelligence levels are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Means And Standard Deviations Of Stress Scores Of Secondary School Students With Regard To Area And Emotional Intelligence

Sr. No.	Level of Emotional Intelligence(B) / Area (A)		Mean Stress Scores			
			High Level	Moderate Level	Low Level	Total
I	Urban	Mean	161.10	160.17	157.86	159.91
		S.D.	21.084	23.777	22.386	23.116
		N	86	367	97	550
II	Rural	Mean	151.99	159.32	163.99	158.92
		S.D.	22.281	23.364	19.372	22.947
		N	73	410	67	550
III	Total	Mean	156.92	159.72	160.36	159.41
		S.D.	22.049	23.549	21.359	23.026
		N	159	777	164	1100

On the basis of the mean scores of stress of secondary school students with respect to area and emotional intelligence, F-Ratios were calculated. The results are given in the Table 2 as follows:

TABLE 2 SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS OF ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR STRESS OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS WITH RESPECT TO AREA AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Sr. No.	Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	d_f	Mean Squares (Variance)	F-Ratio
I	Area (A)	264.429	1	264.429	0.502^{NS}
II	Emotional Intelligence (B)	1743.324	2	871.662	1.654^{NS}
III	Interaction (AxB)	4620.627	2	2310.314	4.384*
IV	Error Variance	576581.697	1094	527.040	
V	Total	28536364.00	1100		
VI	Corrected Total	582704.622	1099		

NS-Not Significant

*Significant at 0.05 Level of Significance

Main Effects

A. Area

The calculated F-ratio for the main effect of area on the stress levels of secondary school students, with degrees of freedom (d_f) 1 and 1094, was 0.502. This value is below the critical F-value of 3.85, even at the 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the Hypothesis No. 1 that "There will be no significant area-wise difference in stress among secondary school students" was retained. This indicated that secondary school students from different areas (urban and rural) did not differed significantly in their levels of stress. The mean stress score of secondary school students with belonging from urban areas was 159.91, while the secondary school students with belonging from rural areas were 158.92, respectively. On the basis of mean score, it may be concluded that the secondary school students with belonging from rural areas and secondary school students with belonging from rural areas showing almost negligible difference.

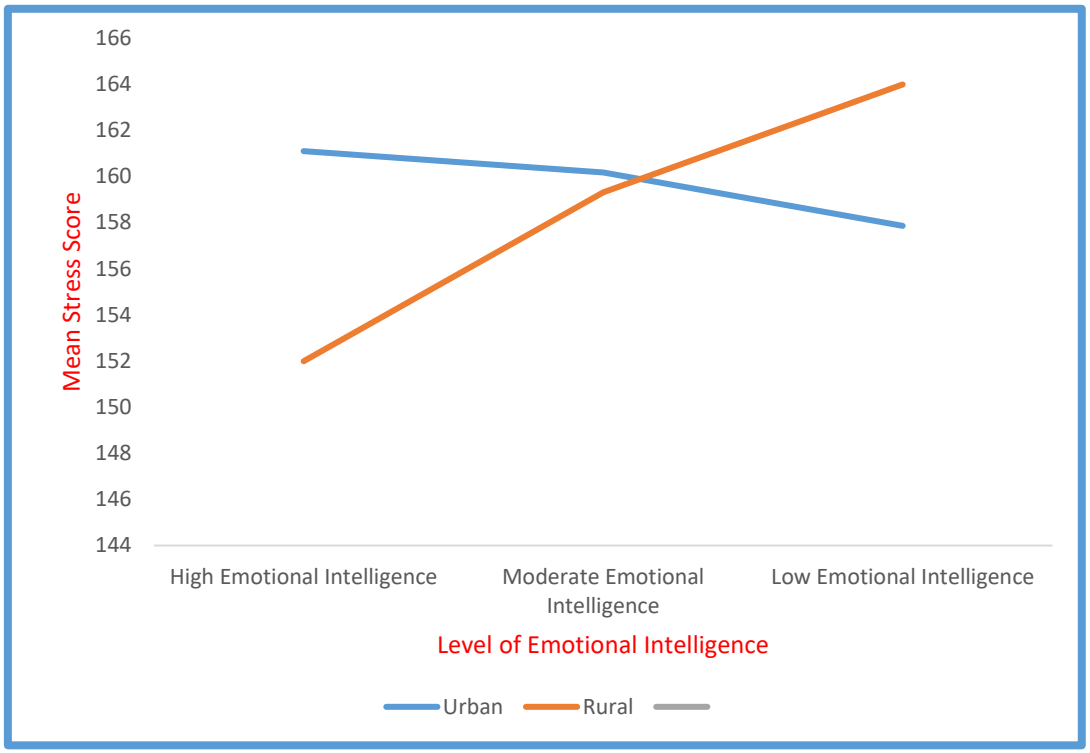
B. Emotional Intelligence (B)

The calculated F-value for finding out the main effect of emotional intelligence on the stress levels of secondary school students came out to be 1.654, which is less than the table value (3.85) even at 0.05 level of significance, for d_f 2 and 1094. Hence, the Hypothesis no. 2 that, "There will be no significant difference in stress among secondary school students with regard to their level of emotional intelligence," was accepted. So, it may be inferred that secondary school students with different level of emotional intelligence did not differed significantly from each other with respect to their level of stress.

In addition to this, total weighted mean stress scores of secondary school students with high, moderate and low level of emotional intelligence were found to be 156.92, 159.72 and 160.36 respectively. Therefore, it may be interpreted that secondary school students with low level of emotional intelligence (mean=160.36) and secondary school students with moderate level of emotional intelligence (mean=159.72) possessed significantly better emotional intelligence as compared to secondary school students with high level of emotional intelligence (mean=156.92).

Interactional Effect (AXB) The obtained value of F-ratio for the interactional effect of area and emotional intelligence on the stress levels of secondary school students came out to be 4.384 which are greater than the table value (3.00) even at 0.05 level of significance, for d_f 2 and 1094. Hence, the Hypothesis no. 3 that, "There will be no significant interaction between area and emotional intelligence with regard to stress among secondary school students" was not accepted. Thus, it may be concluded that the combined influence of area and emotional intelligence significantly affect the stress levels of secondary school students. The slight significant interactional effect of area and emotional intelligence with respect to stress among secondary school students is shown in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1 Interactional Effect of Area and Emotional Intelligence on Stress among Secondary School Students



DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

The present investigation was the stress of secondary school students with respect to area and emotional intelligence. After realizing the data, the study revealed that there exists no significant difference in stress of secondary school students with respect to their area (urban or rural). Stress is a widespread issue affecting students regardless of their geographical location. This implies that educational policies and interventions aimed at reducing student stress should be inclusive and uniformly implemented across both urban and rural schools. Schools in all areas should prioritize student mental health by integrating stress management programs, counseling services, and life skills education into the curriculum. Teachers and parents should be sensitized to recognize signs of stress and provide timely support. Since stress affects students similarly across locations, a holistic, school-wide approach to emotional and psychological well-being is essential for fostering healthy learning environments for all students. The results also revealed that secondary school students with different levels of emotional intelligence did not differ significantly in their stress levels. However, the significant interaction between area (urban or rural) and emotional intelligence indicates that the effect of emotional intelligence on stress may vary depending on the students' environment. This highlights the need for context-specific educational interventions. Schools should not only focus on enhancing emotional intelligence among students but also consider the unique challenges faced in urban and rural settings. Educational programs should be tailored to address the environmental factors that influence how students utilize their emotional intelligence to manage stress. Additionally, teacher training and school counseling services should be designed with an awareness of how locale can shape emotional development and stress experiences, ensuring a more targeted and effective approach to student well-being.

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