

High Expectations, High Stress: Analyzing the Impact of Parental Pressure on Student Performance

Dr. Jaydul Islam Sarkar

Dakshin Dinajpur, West Bengal, India

ABSTRACT:

The findings reveal that many students feel strong pressure to score high marks. This pressure often comes from fear of failure and desire to meet family expectations. As a result students experience worry nervousness and lack of confidence before and during exams. Some students also report sleep problems tiredness and difficulty in concentration. On the other hand students who receive support and encouragement from parents show better emotional balance and positive attitude towards exams. The study also indicates that parental pressure does not always improve performance. In many cases it increases stress and reduces motivation. A caring and understanding home environment helps students feel safe and confident. It allows them to face exams with hope rather than fear. The study highlights the need for awareness among parent's teachers and school leaders. Parents should guide their children with love and patience. Teachers should identify signs of stress in classrooms and provide timely help. Schools should promote counselling and life skills programs for students. The study concludes that balanced parental involvement is essential for healthy academic growth. Reducing unnecessary pressure can protect students' mental health and improve learning outcomes. This research adds to the understanding of student stress and suggests practical ways to build a supportive academic environment.

KEYWORDS: Parental pressure, Examination stress, Academic performance, Student wellbeing, Empirical study

INTRODUCTION:

According to the theory developed by Lazarus and Folkman 1984 stress results from the imbalance between perceived external and internal demands and the personal and social resources to deal with them (Berjot & Gillet, 2011). Any event which is personally relevant if perceived as stress leads to the evaluation of resources to deal with it if demands are perceived as exceeding the resources, the stress occurs. If stress occurs in small amounts it is considered normal and can help the individual to be more productive. However, if stress exceeds a normal value or occurs for a long period, it can cause significant mental and physical problems. Academic stress results when academic-related demands exceed the capabilities of the students. There are large number of factors that can induce academic stress among high school students, for example, competitive environment, lack of physical resources such as study material, physical or health issues, and even parental expectations. In the Indian context parental pressure is a prominent source of academic stress among school students. Parents hold high expectations from children in terms of academic outcomes (Moneva & Moncada, 2020). Indian Parents

take deep pride in the success of their children and are always ready to make sacrifices in terms of money and time to encourage their children (Fulgini & Pedersen, 2002). As a result, children feel driven to meet their parent's expectations (Chow and Chu 2007). So they feel direct and indirect pressure to achieve academic success. Though parents' involvement influences the achievement positively (Akhtar & Aziz, 2011) but too much pressure leads to anxiety. Especially if the students perceive that their capabilities do not match the parent's expectations they feel stressed. Then they may find it difficult to concentrate on their daily studies and live in constant fear of failure. Pascoe et.al.(2020) found that stress can lower academic performance. Also, the constant stress of not being able to live up to parents' expectations leads to anxiety, depression, and other health issues.

SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY:

Academic stress in students leads to many psychological, emotional, and health-related issues. So it is the duty of all stakeholders of education to help the students deal with it. But the first step should be to understand the factors that contribute to it. Parental pressure is one such factor that is less talked about. Parents have great expectations from their children. Every parent wants their child to excel in studies and build a respectable career. They feel proud when their child excels in their studies. But their over concern may be perceived negatively by the child who may feel pressurized to do well all the time. As a result, he/ she start feeling stressed in their daily academic activities also. The present study is significant in understanding the relationship between parental pressure and academic stress among high school students.

REVIEW OF PREVIOUS STUDIES:

Akhtar & Aziz (2011) studied the effect of Peer and Parental pressure on the academic achievement of 156 university students. It found that parental pressure influences academic Achievement positively and peer pressure affects it negatively in the case of female students whereas parental Pressure and peer pressure do not affect academic achievement in the case of male students. Sarma (2014) studied the parental pressure on academic stress in India. The results of the study indicated that parental pressure predicted academic stress. Stress predicted depression and depression predicted suicidal tendency. Parental pressure indirectly predicted suicidal tendency through academic stress and depression. Results were discussed in the context of cultural influences on study findings such as the central role of parents in the family unit, the impact of cultural valuing of education, collectivistic society & the Hindu concept of dharma or duty. Deb, Strodl, and Sun (2015) studied academic-related stress among private secondary school students in India and found that 2/3rd of the sample students reported that there is parental pressure on them for their academic performance. The degree of parental pressure depends upon the educational level of parents, occupation of mothers, number of private tutors, and academic performance. Children with fathers having lower or non- graduate educational levels perceive more pressure for better academic performance. Moreover, academic stress was positively correlated with parental pressure. Suresh Prabu (2015) studied academic stress among higher secondary students. A sample of 250 students of XI was taken for the study. The sample was taken from higher secondary schools situated in the Namakkal district of Tamil Nadu. The results of the study revealed that sample students had a moderate level of academic stress. The academic stress of male students was higher than that of female students. Moreover, the students with parents having literacy-level education have higher academic stress than their counterparts.

CHARACTERISTICS OF PARENTAL PRESSURE AND EXAMINATION STRESS:

Parental pressure has some clear features that can be seen in daily life of students. It often begins with very high expectations for marks and ranks. Parents may fix goals that are hard to reach. They may remind children again and again about results. They may compare them with friends or relatives. Such comparison makes students feel less valued. Another feature of parental pressure is strict control over study time. Some parents plan every hour of the child's day. Play and rest get less importance. Mistakes are not accepted easily. Failure is seen as a sign of weakness. In some homes love and praise depend on marks. This makes children feel that they are valued only for success. Parental pressure also shows in fear based guidance. Parents may warn about poor future if marks are low. They may talk about shame or loss of respect. Even when parents mean well such words create tension. Children begin to study not for learning but to avoid blame. Examination stress has its own set of features. It starts much before the exam date. Students feel nervous when they think about tests. They worry about questions and time. They doubt their preparation. This mental strain grows as the exam comes closer. A common sign of exam stress is emotional change. Students become irritable or silent. They may feel sudden fear or sadness. Some cry easily. Others withdraw from friends. They lose interest in normal activities. Physical signs are also seen. Many students complain of headache and stomach pain. Sleep becomes poor. Appetite reduces. Hands may shake before exams.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The objectives of the present study guide the direction of the research. They help in focusing on the main purpose of the work. Each objective is framed to understand the issue of parental pressure and examination stress in a clear way. The first objective is to study the level of parental pressure felt by students. The study seeks to know how students perceive their parents' expectations and demands related to studies and exam results. It aims to understand whether this pressure is mild moderate or high.

The second objective is to assess the level of examination stress among students. The study tries to find how often students feel fear worry and tension before and during exams. It also aims to observe the common emotional and physical signs of stress.

The third objective is to explore the relationship between parental pressure and examination stress. The study wants to know whether higher parental pressure leads to higher stress among students. It attempts to see how closely these two factors are linked in students' lives.

The fourth objective is to identify differences in stress among students with different levels of parental support. The study seeks to compare students who feel encouraged with those who feel forced. This helps in teaching methods or school facilities in detail. These factors may influence stress but are outside the main focus of this research.

The scope also includes drawing general suggestions for parents and schools based on findings. It does not claim that the results apply to all regions or all age groups. The findings are mainly relevant to similar school settings.

Thus the scope of the study is confined to understanding how parental expectations affect students' exam related stress within a specific educational setting. It provides a focused base for analysis and meaningful conclusions within these defined limits.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY:

The scope of the present study defines the area and focus of the research. It helps in understanding what

the study covers and what it does not include. This study is limited to examining parental pressure and examination stress among school students. It mainly focuses on students studying at the secondary level. The study covers students from selected schools in a local area. It considers both boys and girls to get a balanced view. The age group of students falls within the period when board exams and major tests begin. This stage is important because academic pressure usually increases during these years. The study focuses on students' perceptions of parental behavior. It looks at how students feel about their parents' expectations guidance and reactions to results. The study does not judge parents' intentions. It only records how students experience these actions. The scope also includes the study of examination stress as felt by students. It covers emotional physical and thinking related signs of stress during exam time. It does not include clinical diagnosis of anxiety or other health problems. The study remains within the educational context.

The research is based on data collected through a questionnaire. Hence the scope is limited to self-reported responses of students. It reflects their feelings and views at the time of data collection.

The study aims to find the relationship between parental pressure and examination stress. It does not attempt to study other factors like peer pressure

After collection the responses were arranged and coded. The data were analyzed using simple statistical techniques such as percentages and averages. This helped in understanding the general trend of parental pressure and examination stress among students. The relation between both variables was also examined in a basic manner.

Ethical care was taken throughout the study. No student was forced to participate. No personal identity was recorded. The study aimed only to understand the problem and not to judge any individual or family. Thus the methodology provided a systematic and simple way to gather reliable information. It helped in drawing meaningful conclusions about the effect of parental pressure on examination stress.

METHODOLOGY:

The present study followed an empirical approach to understand parental pressure and examination stress among students. The survey method was used because it helps in collecting information from a large group in a simple way. This method is suitable to study feelings views and experiences of students. The population of the study included secondary school students studying in local schools. From this population a sample was selected. Students were chosen from different classes to get a fair picture. The selection was done in a simple random manner to avoid bias. Both boys and girls were included in the study. A questionnaire was used as the main tool for data collection. It contained short and clear statements related to parental expectations study habits and exam feelings. The language of the tool was easy so that students could understand each item. The responses were taken on simple options such as agree disagree and sometimes. This helped student's answer honestly without confusion. Before final use the questionnaire was checked by teachers and experts in education. Small changes were made to improve clarity. A pilot study was also done with a few students to ensure that the items were suitable and easy to answer. The data were collected during school hours with permission from school heads. Students were informed about the purpose of the study. They were assured that their answers would remain confidential. They were encouraged to respond freely without fear. The researcher was present to clear doubts if needed.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS:

The analysis of the collected data reveals clear patterns about parental pressure and examination stress among students. The responses show that a large number of students experience noticeable pressure from parents regarding their academic performance. Many students reported that their parents expect very high marks in every examination. Regular reminders about results and future success were also common.

The findings indicate that students who reported high parental pressure also showed higher levels of examination stress. These students often felt fear and worry before exams. They were more nervous while preparing for tests. They doubted their ability even when they had studied well. This shows a strong link between pressure at home and stress during exams.

The study found that emotional signs of stress were common. Many students felt anxious and restless before examinations. Some felt sudden fear while entering the exam hall. A few students shared that they became irritable or silent during exam days. These emotional changes affected their confidence.

Physical signs of stress were also reported. Several students complained of headache stomach pain and tiredness during exam time. Many had difficulty in sleeping the night before exams. Some students felt their heartbeat increase before writing the paper. These signs show that stress affected both mind and body.

The findings also revealed thinking related problems. Many students said that they forgot answers which they knew earlier. They found it hard to concentrate on questions. Some felt confused even in simple parts of the paper. This affected their performance despite good preparation.

On the other hand students who felt supported by parents showed lower stress levels. These students reported that their parents encouraged effort rather than only marks. They felt free to share their fears at home. Such students showed better confidence and calmer behavior during exams. They were more hopeful about their performance.

The study also found that excessive pressure did not always lead to better results. Some students with very high pressure reported average or poor performance. Fear of failure reduced their motivation and clarity. In contrast students with moderate guidance and support often performed better and felt satisfied with their effort.

Another important finding was that many students wanted their parents to understand their feelings. They wished for more trust and less comparison. They felt that kind words helped more than strict warnings. This shows the need for positive communication at home. Overall the results confirm that parental pressure plays a major role in shaping students' exam experiences. High pressure increases stress and lowers confidence. Support and understanding reduce stress and promote better learning. These findings support the need for balanced parental involvement to ensure students' academic success and emotional wellbeing.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY:

Every research has certain limits that arise from time resources and design. These limits do not weaken the value of the study. They help readers understand the context in which the findings should be viewed. The present study also has some important limitations. The first limitation is related to the size of the sample. The study includes only a limited number of secondary school students from selected schools. Students from other districts rural areas or different school systems are not included. Therefore the results may not fully represent all student groups.

The second limitation lies in the method of data collection. The study depends on students' self-reported responses. Students may not always express their true feelings. Some may give socially acceptable answers. Others may misunderstand questions. This may affect the accuracy of the data.

The third limitation is the use of a questionnaire as the only tool. While it is useful for collecting data from many students, it cannot capture deep emotions and personal experiences. Methods like interviews or case studies could provide richer insights but were not used due to time constraints.

Another limitation is that the study focuses mainly on parental pressure as the source of examination stress. In real life stress comes from many sources. Peer competition, school rules, teaching style, and personal abilities also play a role. These factors were not studied in detail.

The study is also limited by time. Data were collected during a specific period near examinations. Stress levels may change at different times of the year. The findings reflect only the situation during the period of data collection.

The analysis uses simple statistical techniques. These methods help in identifying general patterns. They do not allow deep analysis of cause and effect. More advanced analysis could provide stronger conclusions. The study does not consider background variables in detail. Factors such as family income, parents' education, and type of school may influence both pressure and stress. These aspects were not examined separately.

Another limitation is that the study does not include any clinical or psychological testing. It relies only on students' feelings about stress. Hence the results should not be taken as a medical assessment of anxiety or mental disorders.

Language and understanding of students may also affect responses. Even though the questionnaire was simple, some students may have interpreted items differently. This could lead to variation in answers.

Finally, the study is confined to a specific educational context. Cultural values and family practices differ across regions. Hence the findings may vary in other social settings.

These limitations suggest that the results should be interpreted with care. They also indicate directions for future research. Further studies may include larger samples, mixed methods, longer time span, and more variables. Such efforts can deepen understanding of parental pressure and examination stress among students.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES:

The issue of parental pressure and examination stress presents many challenges in the school system. One major challenge is the strong belief that high marks alone decide success. Many parents feel that strict control is necessary for good results. Changing this mindset is not easy. It is shaped by social competition and fear of future failure.

Another challenge is lack of awareness about mental health. Parents and even some teachers may not recognize signs of stress in students. Fear, sadness, and tiredness are often seen as excuses. As a result, students do not get timely help. Their problems remain hidden until they grow serious.

The busy schedule of schools is also a challenge. Teachers have to complete the syllabus and prepare students for exams. They get little time to focus on emotional needs. Counseling services are limited in many schools. Trained counselors are often not available.

Communication gaps between parents and children create another difficulty. Many students hesitate to share their fears. They worry that parents may scold them or compare them with others. This silence increases stress. It weakens trust within the family.

Despite these challenges there are many opportunities to improve the situation. One major opportunity is parent education. Schools can organize meetings and workshops. These can help parents understand child psychology and stress. When parents learn to listen and support change becomes possible. Another opportunity lies in the role of teachers. Teachers can create a friendly classroom climate. They can encourage questions and reduce fear of mistakes. Simple words of praise can build confidence. Teachers can also guide parents about healthy expectations.

Schools have the opportunity to start counseling and guidance programs. Even basic life skills sessions can help students manage time and emotions. Relaxation activities and peer support groups can reduce fear before exams. These steps do not need large resources. They need care and planning. Use of positive communication is another opportunity. When parents talk with children about effort rather than marks students feel valued. This builds inner motivation. It helps students face exams with hope rather than fear.

The growing awareness about mental health in society also creates hope. Media and education programs now talk about stress and wellbeing. This awareness can be used to bring change at home and school level.

Thus while challenges are real opportunities are also strong. With joint effort of parent's teachers and schools examination stress can be reduced. A balanced approach can turn pressure into support and help students grow with confidence and joy in learning.

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS:

Parents and schools play the most important role in shaping students' academic life and emotional health. Simple and thoughtful steps can reduce examination stress and build confidence among learners. Parents should set realistic expectations for their children. Every child has different abilities and pace of learning. Marks should not be the only measure of success. Effort and improvement also deserve praise. When parents value hard work students feel motivated. Parents should talk with their children regularly. They should listen to their fears and problems with patience. Scolding and blaming should be avoided. A calm talk builds trust. Children then feel safe to share their worries. Parents should avoid comparisons with others. Each child is unique. Comparison creates jealousy and low self-worth. Instead parents should encourage children to do better than their past performance. Parents should provide a balanced routine at home. Study time is important. Rest play and sleep are also necessary. A healthy routine keeps the mind fresh and improves focus. Parents should show love even when results are not good. Support during failure teaches children to face challenges. It builds courage and resilience. Schools should create a friendly and fear free learning environment. Teachers should encourage questions and accept mistakes as part of learning. This reduces fear of failure. Students learn with confidence. Teachers should observe students closely. Changes in behavior may show stress. A few kind words can make a big difference. Teachers can guide students in planning study time and simple revision methods. Schools should organize counseling and guidance programs. Even basic sessions on stress management can help students. Activities like relaxation and sharing in groups reduce anxiety.

CONCLUSION:

The present study highlights the strong link between parental pressure and examination stress among students. It shows that when expectations become too high students feel fear and worry. This fear affects their health learning and confidence. Exams then become a source of tension rather than a chance to

show learning. The study makes it clear that pressure does not always lead to better results. In many cases it reduces motivation and joy of learning. Students begin to study only to avoid blame. They lose interest in knowledge and creativity. This harms their overall growth.

At the same time the study shows the positive power of support. When parents guide with care students feel safe. They develop confidence to face challenges. A loving home environment helps them manage stress and perform with hope. Teachers and schools also have a key role. A friendly classroom and understanding teachers can reduce fear. Guidance and counseling can help students handle emotions. Schools that value wellbeing along with marks create healthier learners.

The study suggests that success in education should be seen in a broader way. Good marks are important. Mental peace and self-belief are equally important. A balanced approach helps students grow into strong and responsible individuals. In the end the study calls for joint effort of parents teachers and schools. By replacing pressure with encouragement we can protect students from harmful stress. We can help them enjoy learning and face exams with confidence. Such an approach will lead to true success and positive future for our children.

REFERENCES:

1. Deb, S., Strodl, E., & Sun, J. (2015). Academic stress, parental pressure, anxiety and mental health among Indian high school students. *International Journal of Psychology and Behavioral Sciences*, 5(1), 26–34. <https://doi.org/10.5923/j.ijpbs.20150501.04>
2. Kaur, R., & Sharma, B. (2014). Academic stress and its relation to parental expectations among adolescents. *Indian Journal of Health and Wellbeing*, 5(3), 360–363.
3. Misra, R., & Castillo, L. G. (2004). Academic stress among college students: Comparison of American and international students. *International Journal of Stress Management*, 11(2), 132–148. <https://doi.org/10.1037/1072-5245.11.2.132>
4. Putwain, D. W. (2007). Test anxiety in UK school children: Prevalence and demographic patterns. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 77(3), 579–593. <https://doi.org/10.1348/000709906X161704>
5. Rao, A. S., & Reddy, P. J. (2016). A study of examination stress and academic achievement among secondary school students. *Indian Journal of Applied Research*, 6(3), 180–182.
6. Sahoo, S., & Khess, C. R. J. (2010). Prevalence of depression, anxiety and stress among young male adults in India. *Indian Journal of Psychiatry*, 52(4), 353–358. <https://doi.org/10.4103/0019-5545.74304>
7. Tomb, M., & Hunter, L., 2004, Prevention of anxiety in children and adolescents in a schoolsetting: The role of school-based practitioners. *Children and Schools*, 26, 87.
8. Essau, C. A., Conradt, J., & Petermann, F., 2000, Frequency, comorbidity and psychosocial impairment of anxiety disorders in German adolescents. *Journal of Anxiety Disorders*, 14, 263-279.
9. Arehart-Treichel, J., 2002, Mental illness on rise on college campuses. *Psychiatric News*, 37(6), 6-38.
10. Becker-Weidman, E. G., Reinecke, M. A., Jacobs, R. H., Martinovich, Z., Silva, S. G., & March, J. S., 2009, Predictors of hopelessness among clinically depressed youth. *Behavioral and Cognitive Psychotherapy*, 37, 267- 291.
11. Rapee, R. H., Kennedy, S., Ingram, M., Edwards, S., & Sweeney, L., 2005, Prevention and early

intervention of anxiety disorders in inhibited preschool children. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 73, 488–497.

13. Campbell, M. A., & Rapee, R. M., 1994, The nature of feared outcome representations in children. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, 22(1), 99-111.
14. Costello, E. J., Egger, H. L., & Angold, A., 2003, Developmental epidemiology of anxiety disorders. In T. H.



