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ACADEMIC STRESS OF SENIOR SECONDARY MADARSA STUDENTS: AN ANALYSIS

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Abstract

Academic stress is a major area of concern within the field of education. The present study focuses on academic stress experienced by senior secondary madarsa students. The study's basic data was gathered from 105 senior secondary madarsa students in Uttar Pradesh's Aligarh area who were chosen at random. The authors used a self-made Academic Stress Questionnaire and its reliability was tested through Cronbach's Alpha. The percentage, t-value, and Pearson's correlation analysis were used to analysed the data collected. The study results showed that senior secondary madarsa students predominantly experience low academic stress. However, the fear of failure was the only aspect of their high academic stress. A significant difference was seen in the academic stress of boys and girls madarsa students, with boys experiencing higher academic stress levels. Further, the study reveals significant relationships between senior secondary madarsa students' stress levels and variables including gender, nativity, father's occupation, and mother's education and occupation.

Keywords: Academic Stress, Senior Secondary Madarsa Students

Introduction

Any society or nation's prosperity depends greatly on education. Education also plays a crucial role in an individual's growth and development. For providing education to individuals, society and government frequently creates schools and colleges. Likewise, new madarsas are regularly opened under Article 30 of the Indian Constitution. Madarsa is regarded as a normal school where formal teaching and learning take place following Muslim culture. It varies across nations and towns (Peter & Pandey, 2006), ranging from general curriculum day boarding school to mosque-affiliated school with a solely religious curriculum. Generally, madarsa lacks resources compared to the mainstream education system and are associated with a

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weaker section of society. The Prime Minister's High-Level Committee (2006) reported that Muslims are the most educationally backward community in India.

Similarly, the National Education Policy (2020) pointed out that minority communities are underrepresented in school and higher education. Therefore, the only educational choice opens to Muslim youngsters, particularly the weaker and impoverished ones, is madarsas (Sultan et al., 2019). Undoubtedly, today's Madarsa is a major source for providing education to underprivileged Muslim groups. Like others, madarsa students experienced pleasant and difficult circumstances during their academic journey. Further, they encounter numerous challenges while in school, that may arise due to the sudden transition from secondary to senior secondary stage and their period of adolescent age. If they are unable to handle these problems stress occurs. Stress is any condition that disturbs normal functioning and affects individuals' mental and physical well-being. Seyle (1974) described stress as the body's general reaction to any demand made upon it. Jain and Singhai (2017) described stress as emotional or physical tension. It can be divided into four categories i.e. emotional, behavioral, cognitive, and physical (Vliside et al., 1994). Stress may have both beneficial (positive) and detrimental (negative) effects (Oduwaiye et al., 2017). Beneficial (positive) stress increases a person's attitude, behavior, and performance and motivates them. On the other side, negative stress lowers one's morale and productivity and produces anxiety, fear, and panic (Gulzhaina et al., 2018). However, a circumstance or incident that may cause stress in one person may not induce stress in another. Therefore, different people have different responses to handling stress.

In today's fiercely competitive world, academic stress has become widespread among students. It is concerned with mental anguish or distress of some expected frustration connected with academic failure or just being aware that it could happen, which serious detrimental or negative impact on the academic pathway (Lin & Huang, 2014). Sometimes, mild stress helps us boost our motivation to succeed (Yikealo et al., 2018). However, extreme stress causes serious physical and mental health issues (Jain & Singhai, 2018). Nation Education Policy 2020 acknowledged this important issue and recommended that all educational institutions shall implement counselling programmes to help students deal with stress and emotional adjustments. Thus, stress can seriously affect an individual if not managed and controlled effectively.

During the school years, stress may occur among students due to several reasons such as appearing in school examinations, homework, projects, the competitive

nature of one's profession, and prospective future employment (Ross et al., 1999). Apart from that, many students experience stress due to classroom burdens or loads, for example, answering questions in the classroom, displaying consistent academic improvement, making an effort to comprehend the teacher's message, and engaging in peer competition (Lal, 2014). Besides, the academic expectations of teachers and parents put some students under stress. Misra and Others (2000) observed that gender differences influence students' perceptions and reactions to academic stressors. In homes where parents prioritize their sons' education, gender inequality may be stressful for girls (Ghatol, 2021). Academic stress is the same for both boys and girls, though girls are more susceptible to stress because of their personal health, peers, and upcoming events. Many scholars have reported that boys are more likely to be seen managing their emotions, accepting or adapting to the issues and environment, and attempting to solve the problem, whereas girls are more likely to express their emotions or feelings overtly (Hyde & Plant, 1995). Despite the fact, that each gender has a different way of handling stressors. Therefore, this study aims to explore academic stress experienced by senior secondary madarsa students.

Prior Relevant Literatures

A growing amount of researches highlighted the significance of stress in diverse contexts. In the current scenario, stress has become a significant academic concern due to its significant impact on students' social and academic life (Dimitrov, 2017). According to Rana and Others (2019), stressed students have academic, social, physical, and emotional issues. It happens when an individual cannot handle the level of pressure that is both internal and external (Aafreen et al., 2018). Bhargava and Trivedi (2018) pointed out that the younger generation experiences more stress due to the competitive nature of the world. This may be due to the demands of various periods of human development from adolescence to maturity, schooling years as well as general life journeys (Lin & Huang, 2014). Apart from this, it can also lead to low self-esteem among adolescents. Nikitha and Others (2014) in their study observed that low self-esteem is a mental health issue that makes depression and suicidal tendencies more likely. Many studies indicate that stress can negatively impact a student's performance and lead to physical and mental problems, such as anxiety, illness, fatigue, sadness, and high levels of suicidal intention (Gulzhaina et al., 2018). Tung and Chahal's 2005 study found no evidence of a causal link between stress and adjustment in teenage girls. They suggested that the degree of adjustment affects both the stress levels and the number of stressful events. In their study, Hussain and Others (2008) found that, in terms of the severity of academic stress, government school students had much higher levels of adjustment in comparison to private

schools. In another investigation, Subramani and Kadhiravan (2017) discovered a strong connection between stress and mental health. Likewise, many other studies showed a significant relationship between stress and academic achievement (Kaur & Yadav, 2019; K & Subramanian, 2021). Thus, students' academic performance and health-related quality of life are directly correlated with stressful life events (Dusselier et al., 2005; Misra & McKean, 2000).

Gender differences in stress levels are the subject of numerous research. According to Misra and Castillo (2004), men and women perceive and respond to stress differently. Jagaratnam and Buchanan (2004) discovered that boys' and girls' students differed significantly in terms of time pressure elements that cause stress. Research by Kumar and Others (2011) concluded that stress levels differ among males and females, even though the approaches for reducing stress cannot be the same for both. In the same way, Govaerts and Gregoire (2004) found that girls gave stressful situations a greater value, while boys believed they had more resources to deal with stressful circumstances. Another study by Sulaiman and Others (2009) observed the same results, they stated that female students experience different levels of stress than their male counterparts. According to research by Kumar and Bhukar (2013), women in their profession experienced much more stress than males. According to Kaur (2015), male students are far more frustrated than female students, possibly due to their emotional and sensitivity to their surroundings. In contrast, Walton's study in 2002 on stress and coping mechanisms among junior and senior nursing and social work students found no discernible gender variations. Another study by Kaur and Simmi (2015) found no correlation between socioeconomic status and anxiety in boys and girls and no evidence of a difference between the two.

Several studies on academic stress have been undertaken in both genders. In their study, Pourrajab et al. (2014) found that the level of academic stress varied between male and female students. Dhull and Kumari (2015) claim that there are notable differences between the academic stress that male and female teenagers endure. It was shown that teenage girls had higher levels of academic stress compared to their male peers. In addition, they proposed that decreasing academic anxiety, academic dissatisfaction, academic pressure, and academic conflict could lower stress levels among students. Research by Yumba (2010) found that female first-year undergraduate students reported more stress than male counterparts. He also highlighted several stressors due to demanding coursework, achieving good marks, an overwhelming amount of homework, and ambiguous assignments. In a different study, Menaga and Chandrasekaran (2014) found significant academic stress

variations among higher secondary students based on gender, family type, and school management, but no significant difference was seen in connection to study stream and family income. According to Kumari and Gartia (2012), academic success and stress are not affected by gender. Bartwal and Singh (2014) noticed that both male and female teenagers in rural and urban areas experienced almost the same amount of academic stress. Further, a study by Khan and Others (2013) reported that academic stress has a considerable impact on students' academic performance, but no significant difference was found between male and female students' stress levels. Previous studies show paradoxical results on male and female stress levels, suggesting stress is not solely influenced by gender or location, but can also vary depending on the type of school. Hence the authors conducted this study on madarsa students as no existing research has addressed their academic stress.

Objectives

1. To assess the senior secondary madarsa students' academic stress.

2. To compare the academic stress of boys and girls of senior secondary madarsa students.

3. To ascertain the relationship between personal variables and academic stress of senior secondary madarsa students.

Hypotheses

HO_1: Boys and girls among senior secondary madarsa students would not differ significantly on overall academic stress and its various subscales viz. inadequate academic environment, lack of adjustment, personal inadequacy, interpersonal issues, and fear of failure.

HO_2: There exists no significant relationship between personal variables and academic stress of senior secondary madarsa students.

Limitations

The present study was restricted to Aligarh district of Uttar Pradesh. Further, the study was delimited to government-aided madarsa affiliated with the Uttar Pradesh Board of Madarsa Education.

Research Methodology

The authors used the descriptive survey method to fulfil the objectives of the study. The information presented in the study have been taken from primary sources.

Sample

The study's sample was drawn from senior secondary madarsa students in Uttar Pradesh's Aligarh district. In Aligarh district, there are only four government-aided madarsa (3 for co-education and 1 for girls) affiliated with the Uttar Pradesh Board of Madarsa Education that offers senior secondary education (Aalim course). One out of the three co-educated madarsa was selected through a random sampling method, and one girl's madarsa was taken. Thus, two madarsa were part of the sample. The sample comprised 105 senior secondary madarsa students, consisting 53 boys and 52 girls, randomly drawn from these selected two madarsa.

Research Tools

Authors used a self-made questionnaire to measure the academic stress level of senior secondary madarsa pupils. The questionnaire consisted of 40 items based on five areas (i.e. inadequate academic environment, lack of adjustment, personal inadequacy, interpersonal issues, and fear of failure), containing 8 items from each. In the process of designing items, authors took help from other scales. The items were developed in Urdu language keeping in mind the student's background. Further, it was approved by language experts. Thus, content validity was established with the experts' opinions. An internal consistency test using Cronbach's Alpha was used to determine the scale's reliability. Cronbach Alpha coefficient was found to be 0.956 for the component inadequate academic environment, 0.963 for lack of adjustment, 0.933 for personal inadequacy, 0.947 for interpersonal issues, 0.973 for fear of failure, and 0.918 for the overall questionnaire. Thus, all the values of Cronbach Alpha are greater than 0.75, which shows that the tool is highly reliable (as presented in Table 1). The replies were recorded using a 5-point Likert scale (5 for always, 4 for mostly, 3 for sometimes, 2 for rarely, and 1 for never). The respondent must choose one alternate option related to the item based on their feelings. There is more academic stress when the score is higher, and vice-versa.

Table 1: Reliability Statistics

Component	Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient	Number of Items
Inadequate academic environment	0.956	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 & 8
Lack of adjustment	0.963	9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 & 16
Personal inadequacy	0.933	17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23 & 24
Interpersonal issue	0.947	25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31 & 32
Fear of failure	0.973	33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39 & 40
Overall	0.918	All Items

Statistical Techniques Used

The software program SPSS-23 was used to treat the data. To check the assumption of normal distribution, skewness, and kurtosis values were tested. After verifying the normalcy assumptions, the parametric statistical test for the statistical significance of each hypothesis analysis has been evaluated by computing the t-test value, and Pearson's correlation analysis was employed to ascertain the correlation between academic stress and personal variables among senior secondary madarsa students. In addition, the scale's reliability was confirmed through an internal consistency test with the help of Cronbach's alpha. The percentage was also calculated to gauge the academic stress level of students.

Analysis, Interpretation, and Discussions

The study's statistical analysis results are presented in tables, focusing on the specific research problems related to academic stress among senior secondary madarsa students.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Academic Stress (N=105)

Component	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Inadequate academic environment	1.00	5.00	2.138	1.256	1.074	-.290
Lack of adjustment	1.00	5.00	2.536	1.395	.505	-1.474
Personal inadequacy	1.00	5.00	2.625	1.224	.558	-1.053
Interpersonal issue	1.00	5.00	2.502	1.264	.424	-1.537
Fear of failure	1.00	5.00	3.069	1.431	-.300	-1.777
Overall	1.00	5.00	2.574	0.736	-.192	-.712

Table 2 displays the descriptive data on academic stress. The normality analysis of data was conducted using skewness and kurtosis measures. The skewness and kurtosis scores are below almost 1.074, indicating that the data is normally distributed. According to Joreskog (2001), the variable's total score confirmed the assumption of a normal distribution with estimated skewness and kurtosis values less than +1.96 (ranging from -1.96 to +1.96). Thus, it is concluded that the data obtained from the academic stress questionnaire are widely distributed.

Level of Academic Stress

Table 3: Level of Academic Stress of Madarsa Students *(in %)*

Dimension	Academic Stress			
	Low	Mild	Moderate	High
Inadequate academic environment	52.74	12.98	15.24	19.05
Lack of adjustment	41.67	11.90	17.5	28.93
Personal inadequacy	36.55	11.90	22.02	29.52
Interpersonal issue	41.79	9.40	17.02	31.79
Fear of failure	27.5	11.55	13.33	47.62
Overall	40.05	11.55	17.02	31.38

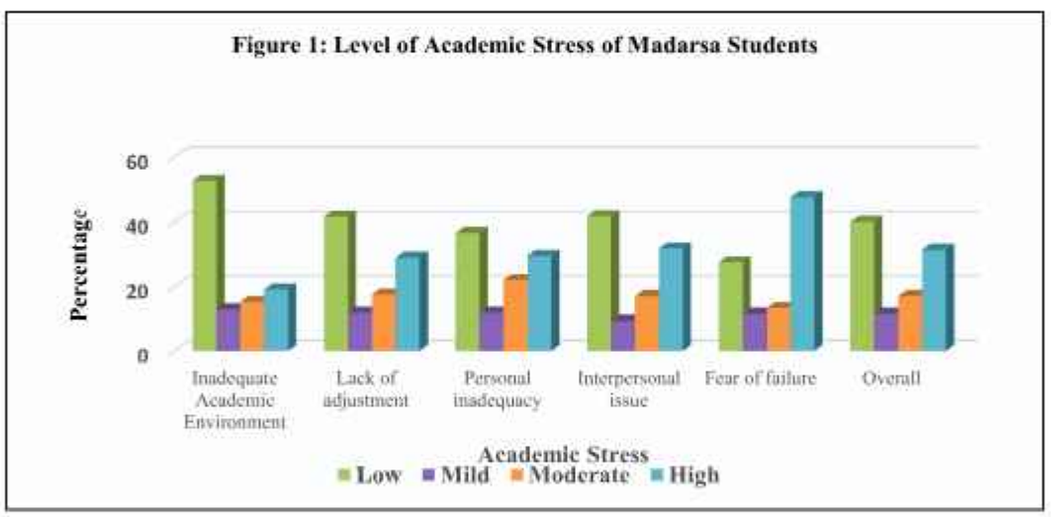

Table 3 & Figure 1 delineate the distribution of academic stress categorized into four distinct levels (low, mild, moderate, and high) corresponding to each dimension. According to the above table (No. 3) findings, 52.74 percent indicated low levels, 12.98 percent reported mild levels, 15.24 percent reported moderate levels, and 19.05 percent reported high levels of academic stress on component inadequate academic environment. Another component lack of adjustment, predominantly results in low stress for 41.67 percent of madarsa students, while a notable fraction reports experiencing high stress (28.93%). Similarly, 36.55 percent felt low stress, 11.90 percent felt mild stress, 22.02 percent felt moderate stress and 29.52 percent felt high levels of stress for personal inadequacy. Furthermore, interpersonal issues manifest as low stress for 41.79 percent of madarsa students, mild stress for 9.40

percent, moderate stress for 17.02, and high stress for 31.79, thereby indicating a significant concern regarding student-teacher dynamics. Notably, the apprehension of failure emerges as a more pronounced stressor, as 27.5 percent of madarsa students report low stress, 11.55 percent report mild stress, 13.33 percent report moderate stress, and 47.62 percent report high stress in this domain, representing the highest degree of high stress among all assessed categories. Collectively, academic stress is predominantly low for 40 percent of madarsa students, while high stress is observed in 31.38 percent of the sample. These findings imply that although low levels of academic stress are widespread across various dimensions as well as collectively. However, the fear of failure component is found significantly high levels of stress. This heightened fear may be attributed to students' high academic expectations, societal pressures, and the inherent uncertainties in their academic journey and prospects, often compounded by limited resources and guidance.

Gender Differences and Academic Stress

Table 4: Gender Differences in Academic Stress of Madarsa Students (N-105)

***Significance: p<.01, *Significance: p<.05*

Dimension	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value
Inadequate academic environment	Boys	53	2.70	1.21	5.118**	.000
	Girls	52	1.57	1.04		
Lack of adjustment	Boys	53	2.89	1.42	2.737**	.007
	Girls	52	2.17	1.28		
Personal inadequacy	Boys	53	3.29	1.19	6.639**	.000
	Girls	52	1.95	0.84		
Interpersonal issue	Boys	53	2.75	1.32	2.078*	.040
	Girls	52	2.25	1.16		
Fear of failure	Boys	53	3.45	1.28	2.813**	.006
	Girls	52	2.69	1.49		
Overall	Boys	53	3.01	0.53	7.750**	.000
	Girls	52	2.13	0.64		

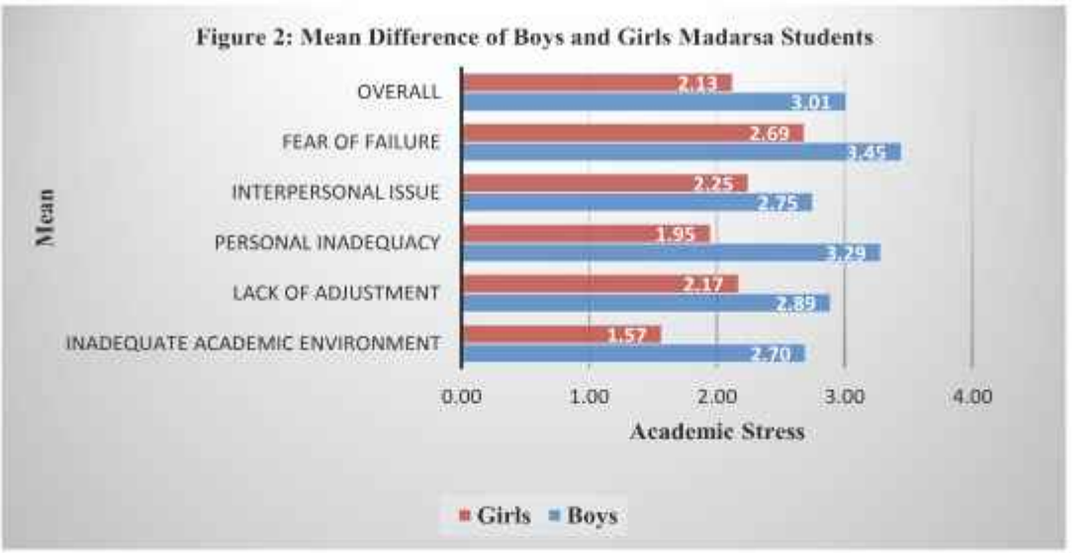

Table 4 & Figure 2 elucidates the gender-based variances in academic stress among senior secondary madarsa students along with a number of its dimensions. The above table (No. 4) reveals that senior secondary boys and girls madarsa students experience significantly different levels of academic stress ($t=7.750$, $p<.01$), as well as for the different dimensions of inadequate academic environment ($t=5.118$, $p<.01$), lack of adjustment ($t=2.737$, $p<.01$), personal inadequacy ($t=6.639$, $p<.01$), interpersonal issue ($t=2.078$, $p<.05$) and fear of failure ($t=2.813$, $p<.01$). Interestingly, the mean scores of senior secondary boys madarsa students are higher than those of girls in totality and across dimensions, including inadequate academic environment, lack of adjustment personal inadequacy, interpersonal issue and fear of failure. This result indicates that senior secondary boys' students experience a higher cumulative amount of academic stress, which might be brought on by parents having higher expectations for boys than for girls. Another reason may be boys face additional or unique pressures within the madarsa setting. In contrast to males, who are said to be less focused and more interested in leisure activities, girls' pupils are highly serious about their academics, do assignments on time, and pay attention in class. The result aligns with previous research by Kumar et al. (2011), Dhull & Kumari (2015), and Ghatol (2021), who stated that boys experience higher academic stress than girls. The current study's finding is in contradiction with the results of the studies conducted by Govaerts & Gregoire (2004), Sulaiman et al. (2009), and Kumar & Bhukar (2013), who reported that females experienced higher levels of stress than males. However, the study of Kumari & Gartia (2012), Khan et al. (2013), Bartwal & Singh (2014), and Simmi (2015) reported that male and female students' stress

levels do not differ statistically significantly. This result leads to the rejection of the stated null hypothesis (HO_1), "Boys and girls among senior secondary madarsa students would not differ significantly on overall academic stress and its various subscales viz. inadequate academic environment, lack of adjustment, personal inadequacy, interpersonal issues, and fear of failure" is rejected.

Relationship between Personal Variables and Academic Stress

Table 5: Coefficient of Correlation (r) Between Personal Variables and Academic Stress

Variable	r-value	p-value	Significance
Gender	-.607**	0.000	Significant
Nativity	-.341**	0.000	Significant
Father's Education	-.081	0.411	Insignificant
Father's Occupation	-.318**	0.001	Significant
Mother's Education	-.273**	0.005	Significant
Mother's Occupation	.287**	0.003	Significant
Class 10th Exam Marks	-.031	0.765	Insignificant

***Correlation is significant at 0.01 level, *Correlation is significant at 0.05 level*

Table 5 investigates the association between academic stress (dependent) and personal variables (independent) of senior secondary madarsa students, employing Pearson's correlation coefficients (r) as a metric for assessing the relationships. It can be seen from the above table (No. 5) that personal variables like gender (r=-.607, p<.01), nativity (r=-.341, p<.01), father's occupation (r=-.318, p<.01) and education of the mother (r=-.273, p<.01) have p-value less than 0.01. These personal variables have a negative correlation with the academic stress of senior secondary level madarsa students. Further, the study found a significant positive correlation between the occupation of the mother (r=.287, p<.01) and the academic stress of these students. However, there is no apparent relationship between senior secondary madarsa students' academic stress and their father's education as well as their class 10th exam marks. It can be concluded that factors such as gender, nativity, occupation of father, mother's education and occupation significantly influence the academic stress experienced by senior secondary madarsa students, whereas the father's education and marks of class 10th exams do not exhibit notable associations with this phenomenon. The findings contradict the claim of Kumari & Gartia (2012) who found that academic stress is not influenced by gender. Likewise, Bartwal & Singh (2014) reported similar results that gender and nativity do not impact academic stress. Thus, the stated null hypothesis (HO_2), "There exists no significant relationship between personal variables and academic stress of senior secondary madarsa

students" is rejected, except for the father's education and class 10th exam marks.

Conclusion

Students experience a variety of academic stresses during the academic year, and gender variations significantly influence students' awareness and response to these stressors. The present study examines academic stress among senior secondary madarsa students in Aligarh district, Uttar Pradesh. The study explored the overall low academic stress levels among senior secondary madarsa students. However, fear of failure component has significantly high stress among them. Further, the findings revealed that senior secondary students in madarsa, both boys and girls, experience varying levels of academic stress across various dimensions (i.e. inadequate academic environment, lack of adjustment, personal inadequacy, interpersonal issue, and fear of failure), with boys experiencing a higher cumulative amount of academic stress. Additionally, the academic stress experienced by senior secondary madarsa students is significantly influenced by factors such as gender, nativity, father's occupation, mother's education and occupation. However, no correlation was observed between the academic stress experienced by senior secondary madarsa students and their father's educational background as well as their class 10 exam scores.

Recommendation

The present study underscores the need for research on academic stress among madarsa students, examining factors such as socio-economic status, parental engagement, school efforts, government financial aid, and personal coping strategies. The study reveals gender variations in stress levels among madarsa students, suggesting the exploration of gender-sensitive approaches to address academic stress. Madarsa can improve the academic environment and reduce exam fear by implementing gender-specific stress management resources and supportive teacher-student relationships. Further, the study recommends the implementation of specific educational policies, counselling interventions, and stress-management programs in madarsa settings, in line with the National Education Policy (2020). Moreover, longitudinal studies may be conducted to monitor madarsa pupils' stress levels and the long-term effects they have on their academic performance and mental health or psychological well-being.

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