

Parental Aspirations and Attitudes as Determinants of Academic Stress Among Adolescents

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ABSTRACT The present investigation was undertaken to study the relationship of Academic Stress with parental aspirations and parental attitudes. Differences among boys and girls in science and humanities stream were studied with regard to academic stress and aspirations and attitudes of the parents of the adolescents. The sample of the study comprised of 120 students of both the sexes studying in twelfth grade in four selected senior secondary schools of Ludhiana city. The results revealed that science and humanities students do not differ significantly as for as academic stress is concerned. Parental aspirations were found to be similar for all adolescents irrespective of their stream of study or gender whereas parental attitude was found to be more positive towards the education of boys studying science as compared to girls.

INTRODUCTION

Academic stress is a mental distress with respect to some anticipated frustration associated with academic failure or even an awareness of possibility of such failure. (Gupta and Khan, 1987).

Stress has been seen tightening its grip on the students, as they have to compete at every step of their academic career in this fast moving world. This shadow of academic stress all the more darkens for the students of 10+2 who have to step out of schools into the world of competition to choose their respective careers. At this stage, besides dealing with the physiological and emotional changes, an adolescent has to cope up with parental expectations, his career and school, which at times tend to have a negative effect on him.

Family, which serves as a first school for the child, appears to be an important source of rising expectations. Parents have an important positive or negative influence on the academic aspirations and achievements of children. An adolescent is strongly and positively identified with parental

model but if that model is indifferent to or suspicious and critical of educational values and goals, the young person is likely to adapt him/herself to respective parent model.

Review of relevant literature revealed that family and parents significantly affect child's performance in many spheres of life. Molnar (1979) found that parents' education and home environment play a significant role in child's academic achievement. Shah and Lakhera (1986) reported that family climate and level of adjustment were highly correlated. Bhatnagar and Sharma (1992) concluded that parental education appeared to be related to academic achievement of students.

Where on one hand, parental involvement leads to better social adjustment and academic achievement, on the other hand over aspirations and negative attitude of the parents lead to depression among students. Parents usually set unrealistically high goals for their children and expect them to come upto their expectations. When children are unable to come upto the expected standards, they are accused of being lazy or dull which induces a sense of inferiority among adolescents and sometimes leads to drastic outpourings by them in the form of mental disorders depressions and even suicides.

The present study is an attempt to find out the differences among parental attitudes and parental aspirations of science and humanities students and also to explore the relationship of academic stress with parental aspirations and parental attitudes.

METHOD AND PROCEDURE

The present study was carried out in four selected senior secondary schools of Ludhiana city. A sample of 120, 12th standard students were drawn randomly for the present study. Also their 221 parents (110 mothers, 111 fathers) were contacted for recording of relevant information.

The sample was evenly distributed among humanities and science students i.e. (n=60). Equal number of boys and girls were drawn from both the streams to assess gender differences.

Tools used for the Present Study

1. Academic Anxiety scale for children: Academic scale for children by Singh and Sengupta (1986) was used to assess academic stress of the students. It consists of two types of items i.e. positive or negative and maximum score obtained could be 20. All positive items are given a score of 1 and negative items given a score of 0. Thus, high score indicates high academic anxiety and vice-versa.
2. Parental Aspiration Scale: Parental aspiration scale by Grover (1987) was used for assessing parental aspirations from adolescents. Reliability of the scale is 0.98 and factorial validity is very high. Scale consists of 77 statements which includes both positive and negative statements which are marked against strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree. Positive statements were scored as 3, 2, 1, 0 and negative as 0, 1, 2, 3. Higher scores on this scale represented higher aspirations and lower scores indicated low aspirations by the parents.
3. Parental Attitude Research Instrument: Parental Attitude Research Instrument by Saxena (1979) was used to assess the parental attitude of the respondents. Reliability and validity of the scale were found to be 0.83 and 0.81, respectively. The instruments include 115 statements covering 23 aspects of attitudes of parents. Parents have to give responses against strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree. Scores were taken in totality regarding all 23 aspects of attitudes of parents.

Statistical Analysis: Chi Square test was applied to find out the differences among the respondents with regard to academic anxiety, parental aspirations and parental attitude of adolescents.

Correlations were computed to ascertain the relationship of academic stress with parental aspirations and parental attitude.

RESULTS

It is evident from Table 1 that there are no significant stream or gender related differences among students as far as academic stress is concerned. The calculated Chi square values among boys and girls of science and humanities streams are 0.268 and 3.697, respectively, which indicate non-significant gender differences in either of study groups. Differences between science and humanities students were also found to be non-significant i.e. 2.68 (critical value of χ^2 at 0.05 level is 5.99).

Non-significant differences were observed regarding parental aspirations of science and humanities students; chi square value being 0.314 (critical value of χ^2 at 0.05 level is 3.84). Chi square value calculated for the parental aspirations of science boys and girls was 0.286 and the corresponding value for humanities group, it was 0.068. These results, thus point out (Table 1) non-significant sex differences in aspirations of parents in both the streams.

No significant differences in the attitude of parents of science and humanities students were observed (chi square value being 1.25). The calculated chi square value for science boys and girls were found to be statistically significant i.e. 12.37, which indicated that parents of boys studying science had more positive attitude towards the education of their sons as compared to their daughters. No such differences were seen in humanities stream as chi square value was 0.603 (Table 1).

Table 2 shows correlations among the studied variables. Results indicated no significant correlations were found either in between academic stress, parental attitudes and parental aspirations in science or in humanities stream.

DISCUSSION

According to the results given in Table 1, the first hypothesis "Science and humanities students do not differ with regards to academic stress" is accepted. As the chi square values were found to be non-significant at 0.05 level, it could be inferred that science and humanities students are equally anxious as far as studies are concerned. Results are indicative of the trend that there is no relationship of the type of the study or sex of the respondents with their anxiety level. Results are in contrast to findings of Gakhar

(1987) who reported science students were superior in intellectual level and achievement than arts students. The possible reason for this could be cut throat competition in every field irrespective of the type of study. Parental aspirations, fear of failure are only some of the factors that club together to make student anxious. Moreover, these days girls are given equal opportunities and thus are expected of performing equally well when compared to boys. The present results could not support the findings of Singh (1972) and Ansari and Krishna (1972) who found males to be more anxious than the females.

Similar findings were revealed while assessing the differences in parental aspirations of adolescent boys and girls. Thus, accepting the IInd hypothesis "There are no significant differences among science and humanities students with regards to parental aspirations".

There were non-significant differences regarding parental aspirations of either science or humanities students, chi square value being 0.314. It might be due to the fact that every parent is concerned about his child and wishes him to be the most successful in his field, whether he takes science or humanities as his/her subject. The results also indicate non-significant sex differences with reference to parental aspirations in both science and humanities group. However, findings of Kotar (1988) indicate that majority of fathers aspire for more often mechanical vocations followed by scientific and then business vocations for their sons than daughters. On the contrary Kaur (1991) concluded that parents of girls took more interest in their studies as compared to that of boys. The present study points out that no gender differences exist with respect to parental aspirations in both the streams of the study. Observations regarding the differences in parental attitude of science and humanities students partially supported the third hypothesis i.e. "There are no significant differences in parental attitudes of science and humanities students with regards to studies" (Table 1). No significant differences in the attitude of parents of humanities boys and girls was observed (chi square value is 1.25). On the other hand differences among parental attitudes of boys and girls in science stream were statistical significant (chi square value being 12.37 at 0.05

level). It could be inferred that parents of boys studying science have more positive attitude towards their sons' studies as compared to parents of girls studying science. Though boys and girls are being given equal opportunities and incentives but still significant number of parents are positively inclined towards sons, may be because of social expectations, acceptance of depending upon sons in various life situations rather on daughters. Results are in line with findings of Iyyampillai et al. (1998) who found that for boys, parents feel that education is a basic necessity and are hence given professional education as medicine, engineering, which have higher probability of getting job and fetching larger income as they are the potential bread winners of the family.

Table 2 shows the correlations between academic stress, parental aspirations and parental attitudes among adolescents. Results indicate that as such no significant correlations have been found between academic stress and parental aspirations and parental attitudes in any of the four categories when the critical value of r at 0.05 level is 0.361. Thus, the fourth hypothesis "There will be a significant positive correlation between academic stress, parental aspiration and parental attitude" stands rejected. Thus it appears that there are factors other than related to family/parents, which are contributing to academic stress among adolescents and family is not the only one. It could also be concluded that family does not pressurise the adolescents to be something in his life. It only motivates them, but adolescents themselves are very conscious of their career and want to achieve maximum within a limited period, which often leads to academic stress among them.

CONCLUSIONS

The results clearly demonstrated that no gender related or stream related differences were seen regarding academic anxiety of the respondents. Adolescents in all the four categories i.e. science boys, science girls, humanities boys and humanities girls are almost equally anxious as far as academics are concerned. Parents were found to share views regarding the aspirations from their children when studies are concerned. However, parents of science boys held a more positive attitude

regarding the education of their sons as compared to their daughters. No significant correlations among academic stress, parental aspirations and parental attitudes were seen thus indicating that family is not the only factor that is responsible for inducing academic stress among adolescents however it could be considered as a contributing factor.

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