

## Academic Stress: Comparative Study of Academic Stress of Class XII Students from Arts, Commerce and Science Streams



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**ABSTRACT:** The present study was an attempt to make a comparative analysis of the academic stress of class XII students from the arts, commerce, and science streams. For this purpose, a total of 90 students from class XII were selected, out of which 30 were from the arts stream, 30 from the commerce stream, and 30 from the science stream. The Academic Stress Scale (ASS) by Poorva Jain and Neelam Dixit (2016) is used. This scale comprises 28 items that delve into various aspects of academic-related stressors and concerns, particularly those associated with the fear of academic failure. The findings of this study contribute to a better understanding of how academic stress varies across different streams, shedding light on potential factors that could be addressed to mitigate stress and enhance the overall well-being of Class XII students.

**KEYWORDS:** Academic Stress, Mental Health, Depression, Examination, Career Uncertainty, and Professional Expectations.

### INTRODUCTION

Stress, recognized as a negative physiological, psychological, and behavioral process, emerges when an individual confronts a stressor (Bernstein et al., 2008). The phase of Class XII is often acknowledged as the culmination of secondary education and brings forth a distinct array of challenges. This juncture holds immense significance as it culminates in board examinations that exert far-reaching impacts on students' future educational and vocational trajectories. A notable issue encountered by students during this period is academic stress. Academic stress denotes the emotional and psychological strain that arises from the pressures of meeting academic expectations, adhering to deadlines, and achieving performance standards (Gautam et al., 2022). Verma and Gupta (1990) have characterized academic stress as mental distress arising from anticipated frustration linked to academic failure or the absence of awareness about such failure. This form of stress encompasses anxiety regarding academic performance and can potentially hinder students from performing at their optimal potential in school and examinations (Prabu, 2015).

Higher secondary education assumes paramount importance in a student's life, as performance and grades at this level wield a pivotal influence on subsequent higher education choices and potentially even career decisions (Rosa and Preethi, 2012, & Ghatol, 2017). In contemporary times, children face heightened stress due to an augmented academic curriculum, intensified school competition, and lofty parental expectations (Gurung, M. et al., 2020). Research on academic-related stress among private secondary school students in India uncovered that 35% and 37% reported exceedingly high levels of academic stress and exam-related anxiety, respectively. All students conveyed elevated levels of academic stress; however, those with lower grades experienced more stress than their higher-achieving counterparts. Furthermore, students engaged in extracurricular activities demonstrated a greater propensity for reporting exam-related anxiety compared to those not involved in such activities (Deb, S., et al., 2015). A cross-sectional study conducted in Tamil Nadu's higher secondary schools highlighted that adolescents experiencing academic stress were 2.4 times more susceptible to depression than their peers without such stress (Jayanthi, P. et al., 2015). To effectively address these concerns, educational institutions should deploy adequate academic support for virtual learning and tools that can detect subtle indicators of heightened academic stress, anxiety, depression, and sleep disturbances. Moreover, integrating sleep hygiene and resourcefulness training into health education for professionals is strongly recommended (Alhamed AA., 2023). A study focusing on stress among high school students revealed that most participants reported normal or lower stress levels; however, female students indicated significantly higher stress levels than their male counterparts. Key sources of stress encompassed examinations, career path decisions, and familial issues. Common stress coping mechanisms employed by students included listening to music, discussing problems with others, and engaging in exercise (Mara Guadalupe Acosta-Gomez et al., 2018).

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This present study seeks to assess the academic stress levels among Class XII students in the arts, commerce, and science streams. Additionally, the study aims to compare the extent of academic stress experienced by Class XII students across these distinct academic streams

### OBJECTIVES

- To study the academic stress of class XII students from arts, commerce and science streams.
- To compare the academic stress of class XII students from arts, commerce and science streams.

### METHODOLOGY

#### Sampling:

Participants in this study were selected from the Udaipur district through a purposive random sampling technique. The total number of samples was 90 students from class XII, out of which 30 were selected from the Arts, 30 from commerce, and 30 from science streams.

#### Tool Description:

Academic Stress Scale (ASS) by Poorva Jain and Neelam Dixit (2016) is used. It consist of 28 items pertaining to the issues related to academic failure. The responses has to be given on Likert type five point continuum scale from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. The 5 score is given to strongly agree, 4 is given to agree, 3 is given to undecided, 2 is given to disagree and a score of 1 is given to strongly disagree. High score shows high academic stress. The test-retest reliability coefficient is 0.86 and split half reliability coefficient is 0.79 and reliability index is 0.89. The test contains face validity.

#### Procedure:

The data for the present research was collected through the questionnaire method. The questionnaire (Academic Stress Scale (ASS) by Poorva Jain and Neelam Dixit, 2016) was given to each student in class XII and filled out by them. Brief instructions were given to them. The responses were collected and scored according to the manual. The scores obtained were analyzed statistically by applying the mean, S.D., and t-test.

### RESULTS

**Table 1 Showing Mean, S.D. and Level of Academic Stress of Class XII Students from Arts/Commerce/Science Streams**

Academic Stress	Mean	S.D.	Level
Arts	78.167	6.953	Average
Commerce	88.800	9.764	Above Average
Science	93.300	8.213	High

Table 1 shows that class XII students from Arts stream have average level of academic stress, class XII students from commerce stream have above average level of academic stress and class XII students from science stream have high level of academic stress.

**Table 2 Comparison of Academic Stress of Class XII students from Arts, Commerce and Science Streams through One-Way ANOVA**

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	3623.356	2	1811.678	25.741	0.000
Within Groups	6123.267	87	70.382		
Total	9746.622	89			

Table 2 shows that there is significant difference in academic stress of class XII students from arts, commerce and science streams. (F-ratio = 25.741, p=0.000; p<0.01)

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Table 3 Comparison of Academic Stress of Class XII students from Arts, Commerce and Science Streams through 't' test

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean Difference	't'	p value
Arts Students	30	78.167	6.953	10.633	4.589	0.000
Commerce Students	30	88.800	9.764			
Arts Students	30	78.167	6.953	15.133	7.702	0.000
Science Students	30	93.300	8.213			
Commerce Students	30	88.800	9.764	4.500	1.932	0.058
Science Students	30	93.300	8.213			

The table shows that there is significant difference in academic stress of class XII students from arts and commerce stream ( $t=4.589$ ,  $p=0.000$ ;  $p<0.01$ ). The mean score infers that class XII students from commerce stream have significantly higher academic stress in comparison to class XII students from arts stream.

The table shows that there is significant difference in academic stress of class XII students from arts and science stream ( $t=7.702$ ,  $p=0.000$ ;  $p<0.01$ ). The mean score infers that class XII students from science stream have significantly higher academic stress in comparison to class XII students from arts stream.

The table shows that there is no significant difference in academic stress of class XII students from commerce and science stream ( $t=1.932$ ,  $p=0.058$ ;  $p>0.05$ ). The mean score infers that class XII students from commerce and science stream have similar academic stress.

### DISCUSSION OF STUDY

The academic stress refers to the pressure and strain that students may feel due to the demands and expectations associated with their academic responsibilities. The academic stress experienced by students in the class XII can be substantial, given the significance of this phase in their educational journey. The present study's mean score infers that class XII arts students have significantly lower academic stress from commerce and science stream and class XII students from commerce and science stream have similar academic stress. The mean and S.D. score shows that class XII students from Arts stream have average level of academic stress, commerce stream have above average level of academic stress and science stream have high level of academic stress.

### CONCLUSION

Academic stress is a common experience among students in Class XII, regardless of their chosen stream—arts, commerce, or science. However, the specific sources and nature of stress might vary based on the characteristics of each stream. Here's how academic stress might manifest in each stream:

#### 1. Arts Students:

**Subjective Evaluation:** Arts students often face subjective evaluation methods, such as essay-based exams and project assessments. The open-ended nature of assignments and exams can lead to anxiety about meeting the expectations of teachers and scoring well.

**Time Management:** Balancing multiple subjects with diverse requirements, such as literature, history, and fine arts, can be challenging. Arts students may need to manage their time effectively to excel in each subject.

**Career Uncertainty:** There might be concerns about future career prospects due to the perception that arts streams are less directly connected to specific job opportunities compared to science or commerce.

#### 2. Commerce Students:

**Numerical Focus:** Commerce students often deal with quantitative subjects like mathematics and economics. The pressure to perform well in these subjects, especially mathematics, can lead to stress, particularly for those who find numbers challenging.

**Business Competitions:** Many commerce students participate in business competitions, which can create additional stress due to the competitive nature of such events.

**Professional Expectations:** There can be high expectations from family and peers to pursue careers in business, finance, or related fields. The pressure to excel and fulfill these expectations can contribute to stress.

#### 3. Science Students:

**Rigorous Curriculum:** The science stream usually involves complex subjects like physics, chemistry, and biology. The extensive syllabus and challenging concepts can lead to stress related to the depth of knowledge required.

**Entrance Exams:** Many science students prepare for competitive entrance exams for fields like medicine or engineering. The intense competition and pressure to secure a seat in prestigious institutions can lead to heightened stress levels.

**Laboratory Work:** Practical components and laboratory work are common in science streams. Balancing theoretical learning with practical application can add an extra layer of stress.

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Common Factors Contributing to Academic Stress in Class XII:

**High Expectations:** Students in all streams might feel pressure to perform well due to expectations from parents, teachers, and themselves.

**Board Exams:** Class XII is often associated with crucial board exams, such as CBSE or state board exams. The weight of these exams can lead to stress.

**Peer Comparison:** Students often compare themselves to their peers, especially in competitive streams like science and commerce.

**Time Management:** Balancing academics with other responsibilities, extracurricular activities, and personal life can be challenging.

**Future Concerns:** Worries about college admissions, career choices, and future opportunities can contribute to stress.

It's important for educators, parents, and students to recognize and address academic stress in healthy ways. Providing support, encouraging open communication, promoting effective study strategies, and teaching stress management techniques can help students navigate the challenges of Class XII and promote their overall well-being.

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