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## **“A Study on Examination Stress Among Higher Secondary School Students in Dhanbad District of Jharkhand”**

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**Abstract:** Examination stress is one of the most common features of higher secondary students which they face in their academic life. Higher secondary stage happens to be crucial stage of education in India as it determines the future path of the students. This study investigated differences if any in the level of examination stress experienced by the students in terms of their gender, locality and stream of study. Stratified random sampling technique was used for data collection. Results of the study showed that there exists a significant difference between the examination stress of male and female students and between rural and urban students. It was also found that students of Arts stream experience significantly higher level of examination stress as compared to students of Science and Commerce streams. However, no significant difference was found in the examination stress level of the students of Science and Commerce stream.

**Keywords:** Examination, Gender, Locality, Stream, Stress, Students

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Examination stress can be conceptualized as a student's interactions between environmental stressors, the student's cognitive appraisal of and coping with the academic-related stressors, and

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psychological or physiological response to the stressors (Lee & Larson, 2000; Lou & Chi, 2000). Academic stress is a pervasive problem across countries, cultures, and ethnic groups, and must be viewed in its context (Wong, Wong, & Scott, 2006). Every student aspires to pursue academic success to achieve respect, family pride, and social mobility (Gow, Bella,

Kember, & Hau, 1996). This results in extremely high academic demands and extraordinary pressure on students and specially adolescents (e.g., Bossy, 2000; Ho, 1996). As a consequence of stress and demands to perform well in examination the students are not able to enjoy their academic life and it becomes joyless and burden for them. Stress may be considered as any physical, chemical or emotional factor that causes bodily or mental unrest and that may be a factor in disease causation. Physical and chemical factors that can cause stress include trauma, infections, toxins, illnesses and injuries of any sort. Emotional causes of stress and tension are numerous and varied. The sign of stress before and during examination are, having irregular sleep, feeling of tiredness, isolated or sad, feeling ache all over, suffer from stomach upset, feeling of restlessness or leading to a condition where you are not able to recall whatever you studied. Getting panic, when you see a question and you cannot answer and your mind gone blank. It is experienced by many normal students and it is not very mysterious or difficult to understand the ways to manage it. Stress is explained by (Pargman 2006, 5) as "An uncertain reaction to external and internal factors" that means a negative or positive reaction to environmental stimuli. In this regard, it is how the totality of your body relate to changes and unfamiliar situations that present itself in the course of time. During such a period, vital organs such as sexual organs,

heart rate, blood pressure, stroke volume, respiratory rate in the body react speedily. Many hormonal responses are at peak.

#### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE:**

**According to Lazarus & Folkman (1984),** stress is a mental or physical phenomenon formed through one's cognitive appraisal of the stimulation and is a result of one's interaction with the environment. The existence of stress depends on the existence of the stressor.

**Feng and Volpe (2000)** defined stressor as anything that challenges an individual's adaptability or stimulates an individual's body or mentality. Stress can be caused by environmental factors, psychological factors, biological factors and social factors.

**Fairbrother and Warn (2003)** studied that Academic stress among students have long been researched on, and researchers have identified stressors as too many assignments, competition with other students, failures, lack of pocket money poor relationships with other students or lecturers, family or problems at home.

**Erkutlu and Chafra (2006)** for instance opines that, when this discomfort that are seldom the subject of consultation. In a recently conducted study, approximately 15% of students indicated having had suicidal ideas, the second leading cause of mortality (after road accidents) among individuals aged 18 - 24 years, and 30% presented depressive symptomology during the previous 12 months.

**Erkutlu and Chafra, (2006)** stated that The

pressure to perform well in examinations or test and time allocated makes academic environment very stressful. This is likely to affect the social relations both within the University and outside (Fairbrother and Warn, 2004) since there is conflict with the social aspect of one life.

**Agolla et al (2009)** have long identified stress symptoms as lack of energy, taking over the counter medication, high blood pressure, feeling depressed, increase in appetite, trouble concentrating, restlessness, tensions and anxiety among others. An individual experiencing one of these factors is likely to be a victim of stress. Although this may also depend on how the individual appraises the situations and how resilient is the person. While the negative effects of stress on an individual may vary considerably from one student based on their previous encounter with the situations and the resilient of the individual student.

**Jaramillo et al. (2005)** point out that, the perception of the individual determines whether or not the stressor has a detrimental effect; that is whether it causes physical or psychological symptoms of stress in the individual.

**Daniels and Harris (2000)** analysis that another reason why little has been done on student stress could be due to the fact that students' presences in the institution have no direct relationship to the quality of education they get.

**Smith et al. (2000)** argue that, unless the university puts appropriate measures that take

care of well being of the students, the student's health may compromise the quality of education .

### **NEED AND IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY:**

There is growing interest in surveying students in higher education to find out how they perceive their experience and to understand the effect it has. In higher education, the autonomy and independence of the student are essential to success. As nowadays the higher education has been distributed by various social and technological courses the students were introduced with all brand new inventions which affects them physically and also psychologically. As the investigator being teacher working in one of the higher secondary school situated in Dhanbad district, was very much interested in knowing the academic confidence and academic achievement of the high school students in his district. Hence the investigator decided to study about the academic confidence of the high school students and their academic achievement.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The objectives of the study are to:

- Identify the levels of examination stress among the students and if there any differences in the examination stress level of male and female students.
- Examine the difference of examination stress levels of the students in respect of their locality i.e. rural and urban.

- Find out the difference of examination stress levels with respect to the stream of study (Arts, Science and Commerce) of the students.

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A descriptive research design has been used for this study. The sample of the study consists of 200 students of 12th grade of Dhanbad district of Jharkhand in India who were studying under Jharkhand Higher Secondary Education Council (JHSEC). There were 100 male and 100 female students of in the age group of 17-19 years from the Arts, Science and Commerce stream. Stratified random sampling technique was used to collect the sample.

### TOOL USED

A personal data sheet requiring students' gender, locality, stream and their school management type along with basic information like name, age, etc. was prepared and used. The investigator also adopted and used the Examination Stress Scale for Adolescent Students developed by Yao-Ting Sung and Tzu- Yang Chao in this study. The scale consists of 27 items covering three dimensions: anxiety responses with 10 items, cognitive and behavioral responses with 8 items and perceived social expectation and social comparison with 9 items. Responses were to be given on 5 point Likert scale with scores from 0 to 4. Here, higher scores indicate a higher level of examination stress. The sample units are categorized into three distinct groups, i.e. high, medium and low level stress group by

using K-means clustering method. The raw scores range from 86 to 123 represents the High Level Exam Stress, from 63 to 85 represents the Medium Level Stress and from 13 to 62 represents the Low Level Exam Stress.

### RESULTS OF THE STUDY

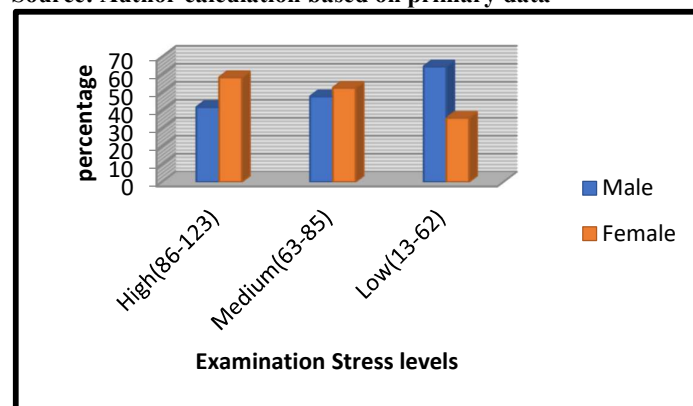
#### Gender Differences in Examination Stress

Regarding the examination stress of the students, it has been found that a maximum number of students experience a medium level of stress, followed by the students experiencing high and low levels of examination stress. Table 1 show that 42% of students experience medium level of examination stress, while 30% students experience high and 28% students experience low level of examination stress.

**Table 1: Percentage of Students and Examination Stress Levels.**

Examination Stress levels	Score Range	Number of Student	Male	Female	Percentage		Total Percent age
					Male	Female	
High	86-123	60	25	35	41.66	58.34	30
Medium	63-85	84	40	44	47.62	52.38	42
low	13-62	56	36	20	64.28	35.72	28
Total		200	100	100			100

Source: Author calculation based on primary data



**Figure 1: Gender Differences in the Examination Stress level of Secondary school student**

**Table 2** shows that the mean score of examination stress of females is higher than that of males. To determine whether the difference of examination stress score is significant, ANOVA test has been done. It shows that the male and female students differ significantly in case of examination stress that they experience. The examination stress among female students is significantly higher than the male students.

**Table 2: Mean, SD and ANOVA for Gender Differences in Examination Stress**

Gender	N	Mean	std	ANOVA	
Female	100	0.16	0.99	F	P-value
Male	100	-0.16	0.98	5.37	0.0215 (significant at 5%)

Source: Author calculation based on primary data

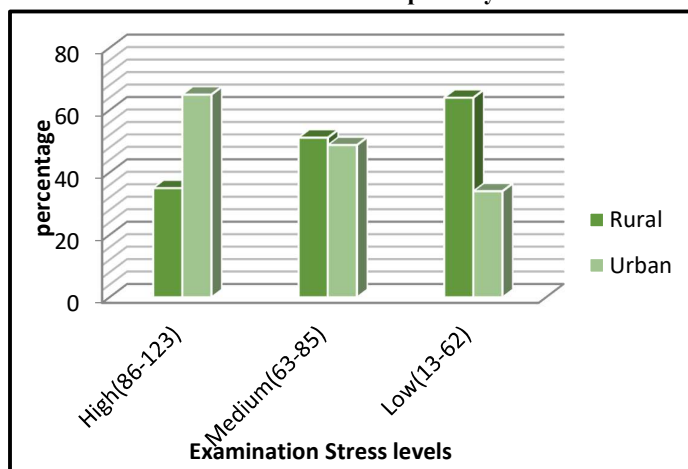
#### ***Examination Stress Among Rural and Urban Students***

From Table 3 we can see that among the students experiencing high exam stress, 65% students are from urban locality, i.e. studying in urban schools and 35% are students of rural schools. In case of the students experiencing medium level of stress, 48.81% students are from urban schools and 51.19% students are from rural schools. While among the students experiencing low level of examination stress, 64% of students are from rural schools and only 29% from urban schools. This shows the clear difference in the examination stress of rural and urban students, especially in the category of high and low level stress. The ANOVA table (Table 4) shows the significance of difference between these groups.

**Table 3: Locality Wise Differences in Examination Stress of the Students**

Examination Stress levels	Score Range	Number of Students	Rural	Urban	Percentage		Total Percentage
					Male	Female	
High	86-123	60	21	39	35	65	30
Medium	63-85	84	43	41	51.19%	48.81%	42
Low	13-62	56	36	20	64	36	28
Total		200	100	100			100

Source: Author calculation based on primary data



From the data in Table 4, it is clear that the mean score of examination stress is higher among the urban students than the rural students. The result of the ANOVA test shows that the difference in the mean scores of examination stress of rural and urban students is significant. hence, it can be inferred that examination stress experienced by the urban students is significantly higher than the rural students.

**Table 4: Means, SD, and ANOVA of Examination Stress of Rural and Urban Students**

Localit y	N	Mea n	std	ANOVA	
Rural	100	-0.23	0.99	F	P-value
Urban	100	0.23	0.95	11.37	0.0009 (Significan t at 5%)

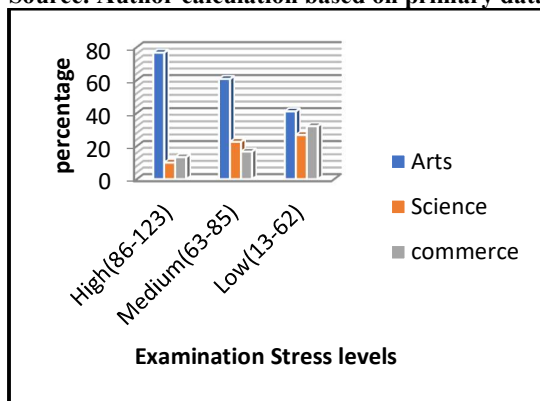
Source: Author calculation based on primary data

### Examination Stress Among the Students of Arts, Science and Commerce

From Table 5, we can see that the percentage of students of Arts stream is highest in all the three categories of examination stress. The percentage of medium stressed students is higher in science stream compared to commerce stream. The percentage of high and low stressed students is higher among commerce stream than the science stream students.

**Table5: Stream Wise Differences in Examination Stress of the Students.**

Source: Author calculation based on primary data

**Figure3: Stream Wise Differences in Examination Stress of the secondary school Students.**

It can be observed from Table 6 that the mean examination stress score of the arts students is higher than the science and commerce.

However there is no significant difference in the mean score of examination stress between science and commerce students. The science and commerce students are similar in terms of examination stress. So, from the sample data, it can be said that the Arts students experience more examination stress than the Science and Commerce students. The calculated F-value shows that there exists significant difference in the examination stress of the students of Arts and Science as well as Arts and Commerce stream.

### DISCUSSION

The results of the study show that examination stress of the female students is significantly higher than the male students. It may be because that the females are more emotional and get tensed easily than the males. Moreover, females are easily scared of, think far and deep which may be the causes of being stressed more than the males. Regarding the locality of the students, i.e. students from rural and urban schools, the result indicates that urban students experience more stress than the rural students. In this present era where science and technology have made the world a global village, still the rural life of our country and of Assam also, is somewhat simple, easy going and far from the high competitiveness and complexities of urban life. It influences the life of the rural students also. Their parents' expectations, social and peer pressure is not very high and dominating. That is why the stress level of the rural students is less. The

complexities and highly competitive nature of urban life affects the life of students adversely. They come under tremendous pressure due to high parental expectation, peer and social pressure and also pressure from teacher and institutions to perform outstandingly in their examination and evaluation. This kind of situation automatically puts the students under pressure and as a result they have to experience higher level of stress. Regarding the stream of study, students from Arts stream were found to have higher level of stress than the students from Science and Commerce stream. It has been observed in Assam that students who score highest marks in their school leaving examination normally take admissions into science stream. It gives them the scope of choosing their career and makes them focused. Commerce stream is also job oriented and provides the students with the scope of getting one job or the other. But in comparison to Science and Commerce stream, Arts stream provides less scope of getting job. The courses provided by Arts stream are not as job oriented which perhaps create stress among the students. Another reason is that most of the students from Arts stream take their courses very lightly and don't follow deep and detailed study. Only just before the examination they are in hurry to complete the course materials which leads them to experience stress of examination.

#### 7. EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS:

Following educational implications can be drawn from the results of the study:

- The study revealed that though the levels of stress are different, students experience examination stress irrespective of their gender, locality and stream of study. This indicates the necessity of stress management programmes at school level.
- The results of the study also showed that female students experience more stress than the male students. So, they should be given special importance. This result will help the teachers, parents and school administration to become extra careful in dealing with the girl students and providing separate counselling and stress management programmes according to their requirement. Similarly, the result also indicates that special care should be taken of the students residing in urban localities as their examination stress level is also significantly higher.
- It has also been found in the study that students from Arts stream have more stress than the students having Science and Commerce stream of study. One of the main reasons is that the courses provided in the stream of Arts are not job oriented and give little scope to the students to choose their career.
- The results also point out the necessity of awareness programmes and capacity building programmes to be provided to the parents and teachers so that they can identify those with examination stress and take care

of them effectively.

## CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that examination stress is experienced by all the students irrespective of their gender, locality and stream of study. However, we get to see differences among the levels of examination stress of the students across their gender, locality and stream of study. There is therefore a need for policy level and institutional interventions for reducing examination stress among the higher secondary students so that they can face stressful situations and adopt proper coping strategies. Teachers, parents, peers and the society at large have to play a very supportive role in this regard. It will definitely help the students to make their academic life stress free and enjoyable and hopefully lead them towards a better future.

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