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ACADEMIC STRESS AMONG NEET ASPIRANTS CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT
This case study was carried out with the purpose of identifying the factors of academic stress and how it affects the academic outcomes. The study explored how different individuals are affected with different factors in different ways during their preparation for NEET exams .The study took place with a group of two members from a Pre-University college located in Urban. Data collection techniques included document analysis, administration of Academic stress inventory as well as interviews with parents, teachers and the clients. The data collection focused on different stress factors like Teacher stress, Test stress, Result stress, Studying in group stress, Peer stress, Time management stress and Self-inflicted stress. The lack of emotional support in the absence of parents was a major factor as reported by the two clients. The major concern given by the clients were: not able to complete the lengthy syllabus and the fear of not getting selected in the NEET exam. The lack of achievement in every weekend mock NEET was increasing the stress.

KEYWORDS: *Academic stress, NEET*

INTRODUCTION
Stress is an inevitable part in an individual's life. It normally serves as a useful purpose in life by stimulating effort, inventiveness and high standards but when it increases beyond optimum level it adversely affects the coping mechanisms and hampers growth. Selye (1976), stated that stress is the non-specific response to any demand. Any condition that places special demand upon a person tends to cause stress. Stress, according to Spielberger (1982), is the external force that acts on. McGrath (1976), prefers to define stress in terms of a set of conditions as having stress in it. Stress involves an interaction of person with environmental demands from the person. When these demands are not fulfilled, individual faces disequilibrium. New demands are imposed by rapid change in the education system; these, in turn, cause stress.

Academic Stress
Academic stress is a form of stress that is constantly being experienced by the students in relation to academic concerns. According to Wilks (2008), "Academic stress is the product of a combination of academic-related demands that exceed the adaptive resources available to an individual". According to Gupta and Khan (1987), academic stress is a mental stress with respect to some anticipated frustration, associated with academic failure or even an awareness of possibility of such failure. In view of Shah (1988), academic stress means a pervasive series of urgency to learn all those things which are prescribed by the school. Hence, academic stress occurs when an individual is confronted by an academic related situation that he perceives as overwhelming and cannot cope up with.

According to Firman (1992), academic stress is anything that imposes an extra demand on a person's ability to cope, often with something that is new and different in academics. Papalia et al. (1998), regarded academic stress as a negative trait in their study. It was put forth that academic stress occurs when effortless learning does not take place, students lose confidence, motivation and interest and this creates more stress to carry out their activities relating to academics. It also means pervasive sense of urgency of learning all those things which are related to or prescribed by school (Shah1988).

Jha (2004), defined academic stress as a mental or physical strain, resulting from educational demands or challenges or academic achievements. Academic stress can be measured. Its symptoms can be observed by a teacher, a parent, a counsellor or a friend or by people whom he/she closely associated with.

NEET Aspirants
The expansion of NEET is National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test or is a single entrance examination conducted for aspirants seeking admission to medical courses across India. NEET aspirants are the Senior Secondary students from different Boards from India. NEET examination is held only once a year. In such cases students join some of the professional coaching institutes in different cities by staying in a hostel, paying guest or with relatives. NEET examination is conducted by National Testing Agency (NTA). The NEET aspirants must have studied Physics, Chemistry and Biology/Biotechnology and English as compulsory subjects.The class 12 minimum percentage required for NEET exam is 50% for unreserved category, 40% for Other Backward Communities (OBC)/Scheduled Caste

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(SC)/Scheduled Tribe (ST) and 45% for Person with Disabilities (PWD). There is no restriction on the maximum number of attempts.

NEET is the eligibility test for getting into medical courses like Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS), Bachelor of Dentistry (BDS) etc. A total of 20 lakh plus candidates appear for the NEET examination every year for One lakh seats

Only a few students are able to get the merit seats for the above courses due to very limited seats. Experts say that the standard of the question paper of the above said examination is high. The examination is conducted out of 720 marks for 200 minutes. A total of 200 multiple choice questions will be there in the paper. Out of which 180 questions are to be attempted. Each correct answer will carry 4 marks and a wrong answer will carry a -1 mark. 50 questions are asked from Physics, Chemistry, Botany and Zoology respectively. Every year NTA will declare the cut off pass marks for NEET as qualification mark. Students who pass this examination are eligible for part payment seats and NRI quota also.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

One of the sources of academic stress among students include fear of examination, resulting in students losing interest under too much pressure of study (Chadha and Sahni, 1988; Malhotra,1999). In 1992, the ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, under the chairmanship of Yashpal, set up a National Advisory Committee to advice on the ways and means of reducing academic pressure and anxiety among students at all levels. The report highlighted that major sources of academic stress among children are the problems of curriculum load and scarcity of leisure time.

Chiang (1995), proposed that examinations, excessive homework, unsatisfactory results and punishment are the main sources of academic stress among adolescents. High expectations of parents, teachers and self-causes academic stress among adolescents. Awino and Agolla, (2008), have reported that overcrowded classrooms, scarcity of leisure time both at school and at home and admission procedures lead to academic stress. Polk (2001), has revealed that gender based expectations and boredom in classrooms cause academic stress. Personal goals, maladjustment to the campus environment and lack of support networksoften cause academic stress (Wilks, 2008). Misinformed vocational and educational choices, competition with other students, failures, lack of pocket money add to academic stress (Fairbrother and Warn, 2003). Poor home environment, poor relationships with teachers and other students (Ongori, 2009) have also been found causing academic stress.

Thus, academic stress can said to be the product of classroom related, school related, teacher related, parents' related factors and self- perception of the adolescents as well. Stressors may be discipline based, curriculum based, achievement based and expectations based. These stressors may function individually or at times in interaction with each other and sometimes in total causing an adolescent to perceive academic stress. Kar *et al.* (2021), performed a study to assess the temporal correlation by relating the date of suicide with the dates of NEET examination in 2018, 2019, and 2020 in India: A Media Report Analysis Study. The study attempted to assess the temporal correlation by relating the date of suicide with the dates of NEET examination in 2018, 2019, and 2020. About 55% (n = 10) of the total suicides from 2018 and 2019 and occurred in the month the result was declared. Academic challenges were reported to be the most common attributing factor (in 65% of cases, n = 21). Anxiety regarding the exam was reported in 78% (n = 11) of student suicides in 2020. The presence of any life event was affirmative in 23 cases (72%), with the failure in the NEET exam being the event among 9 students. Hanging (n = 21, 65%), drowning (n = 4, 13%), and poisoning (n = 3, 9%) were the leading methods of suicide.

Arunkumar and Maliga (2021), conducted a study to determine the attitude towards the NEET examination among higher secondary school students in Erode District of Tamil Nadu.350 students participated in the survey. NEET attitude scale by Nithya(2017) was used. The study found that students had neither positive nor negative attitude towards the NEET examination..

Yadav and Srivastava (2020) conducted a study to investigate the correlation between academic stress and suicidal ideation among students. The sample of this study included 200 students from Allen Institute of Kota (Rajasthan) . 100 were IIT aspirant students and 100 were NEET aspirants. Academic stress measured using the academic stress scale developed by Rao, and suicidal ideation measured using the suicidal ideation scale was developed by Sisodia and Bhatnagar. The result of this study showed that no significant difference in academic stress among IIT and NEET aspirant students and significant difference was found in suicidal ideation among IIT and NEET aspirant students.

METHODOLOGY

The proposed methodology for this study was a case study. This study sought to understand the factors affecting the academic stress of NEET aspirants. This exploratory methodology made it possible to identify the academic stress factors and environmental factors and the perception of individuals responsible for the academic stress among the NEET aspirants. Face to face interview with the 2 clients to assess the details of the problems faced by them in the classroom, hostel, during and after exam.

CONTEXT AND PARTICIPANTS

The context for this study was a Pre-University College located in sub urban area were a good number of NEET aspirants are staying in hostel. The participants were 2 students from the same college. These two students were undergoing regular coaching preparation for the NEET examination.

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Face to face interview with all the two students were conducted. Academic stress Inventory (Ying ling Min & Farn Shing Chen) instrument was used to examine the level of academic stress. The instrument also gives a detailed picture of different factors in different areas effecting the aspirant like Teacher stress, Result stress, Test stress, Peer stress, Time management stress, Studying in group stress and Self-inflicted stress. After recording the symptoms and the presenting complaints given by the students the scoring for the scale is done. Significant problems narrated by the clients were identified and areas of concern with the type of stress affected the individuals are identified and areas for further research.

Case 1:
Case is the eldest of two children was born in the year 2007.Her parents both have the same level of education .Both are graduates. Completed class 10 in English Medium (CBSE) with 85% in the board exam. She is hailing from the district of South Kanara . Since no NEET coaching is available in her locality she chose to stay in hostel

Parents are also interested in Case 1 to take the Medical profession. Parents reported that she has high aspiration to be a doctor and she is hard working. During the interview the client reported that she used to get headache during the time of exam. Sometimes numbness in the body and excited breathing. She complained about going blank in the examination hall. She complains about lot of portions pending before the exam. A good number of chapters in Physics and Chemistry she did not understand only. She takes a long time for learning the chapters. A few chapters she finds as difficult and she tells that she is post phoning the study of such chapters. She also complains about lack of understanding of questions in the exam hall .As reported by the teacher's case 1 is hard working. She feels that Physics is a difficult subject. It has more numeric problems. It is very difficult to score in Physics. Scores high marks in theory exams not in competitive. The raw score obtained in academic stress inventory is 136 which falls in the category of High academic stress. Scored very high scores in Teachers stress, studying in group stress, Test stress and Time management stress.
As a result of findings we can describe this case as a student having high academic stress.

Case 2 is the eldest of three children was born in the year 2008.Her parents both have the same level of education .Both are graduates. One of the parent is a health department professional. Completed class 10 in English Medium(CBSE) with 90% in the board exam. She is hailing from the district of Bangalore.

Parents are also interested in Case 2 to take the Medical profession. Parents reported that she has high aspiration to be a doctor and she is hard working. During the interview the client reported that she used to go blank in the exam hall, Palpitation is very common. She gets in to exited breathing. She complained about migraine headache. Reported that she got ulcers in the stomach. She complained about lot of portions pending before the exam. She tells that she has fear of examination and will shiver during exam. She becomes anxious as reported by her. She finds it as difficult to take decisions with regard to a few questions. A few chapters she finds as difficult. As reported by the teacher case 2 is hard working. She feels that Physics is a difficult subject. It has more numeric problems. It is very difficult to score in Physics. Scores high marks in theory exams not in competitive. The raw score obtained in academic stress inventory is 140 which falls in the category of High academic stress. Scored very high scores in Teachers stress, studying in group stress, Peer stress, Test stress and Time management stress.

As a result of findings we can describe this case as a student having high academic stress Finds numerical problems as difficult in Physics and Chemistry. The client seems to have high academic stress causing reactions in the Physiological, Emotional and Cognitive level

CONCLUSIONS

This case study sought to understand the areas affect the academic stress related to NEET examination and the highly competitive environment and the Psychological components effect the aspirants during preparation for NEET exams. Findings of this study generally supports the literature reviewed in limited context because only a few studies are available because of the Indian context and the NEET exam has begun very recently. From the above cases it is possible to conclude that some of the factors like teacher stress, Test stress, Studying in group stress, Peer stress, Time management stress are the reasons for academic stress. This has affected cognitive factors like difficulty in concentrating, Forgetting, day dreaming, Difficulty in problem solving, doubt about own abilities. The impact also seen in the affective areas like feel under pressure and sad, worry about parents expectations. The effect also noted in some of the physical areas like headache, nervous, lack of desire to eat and ulcers. The effect also seen with lack of motivation with boredom, difficulty in completing lessons, feeling to give up NEET aspiration. The effect is also seen in Interpersonal area like staying alone, getting irritated, feeling of helplessness.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Findings of the paper highlight the need to pay attention to the Academic stress level experienced by the NEET aspirants because of the high competition for getting the medical seats. Intervention to overcome academic stress in this area to be worked upon. Coping mechanisms with Awareness of the Aptitude and the Skills required to be enhanced to be paid due attention. Proper learning methods with learning styles and conceptual understanding with the competencies in the required subjects. Relaxation techniques like mindful meditation. Proper career guidance for parents and aspirants. Accepting defeat with right attitude and building resilience to fight back is the skill to be nurtured among the NEET aspirants.

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