

Academic Stress Among Children with Learning Difficulties -A Social Work Perspectives

Journal of Humanity and Social Justice.
Volume 5 Issue 2, 2023. 84-96
Journal Homepage:
<http://ojs.isjn.or.id/index.php/journalhsj>
e-ISSN: 2657-148X

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Competencies; Social Work; School Social Work; learning disabilities.

How to cite:

Wahab, A., R., V., & M., M. P. (2023). Academic Stress Among Children with Learning Difficulties-A Social Work Perspectives. Journal of Humanity and Social Justice, 5(2), 84-96.

ABSTRACT

Social Work is a practice-based profession in which trained professionals are devoted to helping vulnerable people and promote for social changes. Learning disabilities are in which condition in the brain that causes difficulties in receiving and processing information and they can be caused by many factors. In children, learning disabilities can be caused by various factors like genetics, parental risks, psychological trauma, various and factors in a child's environment and this may be caused by some physical trauma too. Social workers deal with these disorders with their professional skill and technical skills. In India 1.69% of children are having learning disabilities, hence dealing with this disorder and coming up with a solution is significant. The objective of the study is to explore the Competencies of social workers in dealing with children having learning disabilities the data was gathered in shivamogga city with convincing and purposeful sampling with 'The academic stress scale' by Dr. Poorva Jain & Mrs. Neelan Dikshit. The findings show that the majority of the school-goings were having learning disabilities but teachers failed in identifying problems hence Social Work professionals have a significant role in schools. emphasizing their unique capacity to bridge the gap and provide specialized support to children with learning disabilities. Implications of the study highlight the need for enhanced teacher training, collaboration with social work experts, and tailored interventions to better serve students with learning disabilities, fostering a more inclusive and supportive educational environments.

1. INTRODUCTION

A child with a learning disability may have difficulties in reading, writing, speaking, listening, and understanding mathematical concepts and general comprehension. The top five most common learning disabilities are dyslexia,

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Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), dyscalculia, dysgraphia, and dyspraxia. These prevalence estimates can vary based on different studies and populations. These prevalence estimates can vary based on different studies and populations. (L D Resource foundation) Social work is a practice-based profession in which trained professionals are devoted to helping vulnerable people and promoting social change. The profession of school social work began in the 20th century, fuelled by immigration, life struggles, social conditions, and poverty which affected the development and expansion of educational opportunities for all children (Poppy, 2012); Allen-Meares, 2006; Agresta, 2004). Over the time of the Great Depression (1930s) social workers refocused their earlier commitment to changing adverse conditions in the schools and acting as the link between home, school, and community; therefore, school social workers sought a specialized role in providing emotional support for troubled children (Hall, 1936). Then in the 1940s and 1950s, there was a shift and the term visiting teacher was replaced with the term school social worker and the profession adopted a more therapeutic and clinical approach for individual children within the schools (Lakshmi, 2014) (Agresta, 2004).

School Education

The role of school education in promoting the learning and well-being of young people has never been more important, yet our understanding of how best to achieve these goals seems to be becoming increasingly tenuous. The goals of our education are to equip children to the best of their ability for a lively, constructive place in society and also to fit them to do a job of work (James Callaghan Ruskin College Oxford 18 October 1976). Not one or the other, but both. There is no virtue in producing socially well-adjusted members of society who are unemployed because they do not have the skills.

School education means the education from pre-school classes through class first to twelfth. Of the world's 787 million children of primary school age, 8% do not go to school. School is the basic foundation of knowledge being imparted to a child. It gives a chance to children to acquire knowledge in various fields of education, such as people, literature, history, mathematics, politics, and other numerous subjects. There is a wide variety of educational systems across the world. These vary in scale, purposes, and in ways of operating. The scale of educational provision is normally directly related to the size of the country since it is a provision that is intended to support the needs of each country. The ways in which education supports active citizenship in each country varies, however. In different countries, education has different purposes and these purposes often relate to the view government has about the national system of state education. This can vary from a high degree of central control from the government to minimalist central intervention by the government and the support of more locally based purposes of education. The ways in which educational systems therefore operate vary considerably in style and in control.

School education in India

In India, both the public and private sectors contribute to the funding and management of education. These three levels are central, state, and local. In India, the Union Government and the state share jurisdiction for education, with the Union

having some tasks and the states having autonomy for others. The Indian educational system is separated into several stages, including pre-primary, primary, elementary, secondary, undergraduate, and postgraduate. The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) is the supreme authority in India for subjects pertaining to the school curriculum (Patel, 2013).

India has a four-tiered educational system, with lower primary (ages 6 to 10) and upper primary (ages 11 and 12), high (ages 13 to 15), and higher secondary (ages 17 and 18). There are five "standards" in the lower primary school, two in the upper primary school, three in the high school, and two in the higher secondary school.

The National Education Policy, or NEP, was implemented by the Indian education department in the year 2020. It placed an emphasis on using the mother tongue as a medium of instruction until class 5, while also recommending that it continue until 8 standards and beyond. Children are expected to learn three languages as a result of this recommendation (India, 2020).

School education in Karnataka

According to a statistical analysis by the National University of Educational Planning and Administration (2014), the educational system in Karnataka is divided into four levels: primary (classes 1-5), upper primary (classes 6-8), secondary (classes 9-10), and higher secondary (classes 11-12). Karnataka's educational system offers both formal and informal learning opportunities. The Karnataka Government which has implemented "The Right to Education Act" for all children is in force. The state has adopted a 10+ 2+ 3 mode of the education system. So between 1 and 10 years of schooling, pre-school education is 2 years, and graduate education is at least 3 years (Victor, 2016).

The National Education Policy, or NEP, will be implemented by Karnataka as the country's first state beginning in November 2022 under the early childhood education component for children older than three years. According to the official release, 20000 Anganwadi and schools would receive NEP in the initial phase.

Academic stress among the students

Academic stress has become the greatest health obstacle as it adversely impacts students' physical and psychological health. Stress can be defined as any type of change that causes physical, emotional, or psychological strain. Stress is defined as a student's psychological state resulting from continuous social and self-imposed pressure in a school environment that depletes the student's psychological reserves. The causes of this academic stress can be examined, deadlines, returning to study, difficulty in organizing the work, feeling inferior and many more can be reasons (Aiman, 2020)

One of the most common topics that are the subject of much research is stress among students, particularly with regard to the main sources of stress (Bataineh, 2013). Examined the academic pressures that students encounter. The results showed that pupils moderately experience a number of stressors, such as academic overloads, awkwardness in the classroom, a lack of study time, exams, a lack of enthusiasm, and

high family expectations. The students identified the two things that were most stressful as being the fear of failure and academic punishment. Similarly, another study indicated that one of the main causes of academic stress among students was workloads or academic overload (Dema, 2015). Exams, poor grades, and staying up late were also discovered to be contributing contributors to academic stress. In addition, Dema (2015) noted that during test and peak assessment periods, students felt moderate to above-moderate levels of stress (Sayed, 2015). Due to the extensive curriculum and the instructor's discontent, more students felt under pressure.

Academic stress among the students and the children having learning difficulties

In 2023, researchers embarked on a dual exploration of academic stress among students and children with learning difficulties. Their findings illuminated the common threads of stress that connected these seemingly disparate groups. Students grappled with the pressures of exams, coursework, and personal commitments, while children with learning difficulties faced the additional challenge of adapting to traditional education systems that might not cater to their unique needs. Despite the differences in their struggles, the research underscored the shared experience of academic stress, sparking discussions on inclusive educational practices and support mechanisms. In a study conducted in 2022, researchers delved into the coping strategies employed by students in the face of academic stress. Their investigation revealed that students turned to a range of mechanisms, including seeking social support and practicing mindfulness, to navigate the challenges of education. The study highlighted the importance of these strategies in influencing students' mental well-being. By shedding light on effective coping mechanisms, the research provided insights that could empower students to manage stress and prioritize their psychological health.

In 2021, scholars focused their attention on the intersection of academic stress and children with learning difficulties. They explored how conditions like dyslexia, ADHD, dyscalculia, dysgraphia, and dyspraxia intersected with stress within educational settings. The research offered insights into the unique challenges faced by these children and the potential impact of stress on their academic experiences. By illuminating these dynamics, the study contributed to discussions on tailored support systems and accommodations that could alleviate the stressors faced by these students.

This study examined school-related stress in children with disabilities, specifically the sources and manifestations of such stress and whether these differ for children from different disability groups or age groups. Subjects are around 60 students and in that 30 were normal students of grades 8 to 10 high school and 30 students were students having learning disabilities. Academic stress in children having learning disabilities is slightly less than the normal students because of what, how, and where they study.

The definition of academic stress is the anxiety and stress that comes from schooling and education. There is often a lot of pressure that comes along with pursuing a degree and one's education. There is studying, homework, tests, labs, reading, and quizzes. There is the stress of doing all of the work, balancing the time

and finding time for extra-curricular activities. Academic stress is especially hard on school students who are often living away from home for the first time. Apprehended by a person that are exceeding his or her ability to deal with them (Shirom, 1986). Academic stress among students has long been researched on, and researchers have identified stressors as too many assignments, competitions with other students, failures and poor relationships with other students or lecturers (Warn, 2022).

Academic stressors include the student's perception of the extensive knowledge base required and the perception of an inadequate time to develop it (Carveth et al, 1996). Students report experiencing academic stress at predictable times each semester with the greatest sources of academic stress resulting from taking and studying for exams, grade competition, and the large amount of content to master in a small amount of time (Abouserie, 1994). When stress is perceived negatively or becomes excessive, students experience physical and psychological impairment.

School Social Work

School social worker carries out the psychosocial services within a teamwork perspective in the educational team, in solving problems because of the developmental stages or family or life conditions; utilizing of the services and thus carrying on their educational activities in a successful manner. School social workers design and implement school-based programs to promote a positive school climate among all students. They work with the entire student body to identify students in need of more intensive interventions and connect these students to additional services in the community where needed. School social workers serve as a resource to the principal and other educators, providing consultation and training on identifying students with mental health needs and a referral process when services are sought. Working more closely with individual students and their families, school social workers also create a bridge between the school and the community when linking such services. This coordination is critical in a successful school and community partnership to maximize limited resources, facilitate better service delivery, and maintain communication between partners.

School social work is a specialized area of professional practice in the broad field of social work. School social workers are trained in providing comprehensive support and services to address barriers impacting the social, emotional, academic, and physical needs of all students. School social work services include assessment and screening, individual and group counselling, crisis intervention and prevention, family support, advocacy, and classroom instruction. School social workers provide consultation and training to administrators and school personnel related to the whole child, including behavior and classroom management, mental health, child abuse, and neglect, and other crises. School social workers address the varied needs of students, with and without disabilities, who may be experiencing violence and harassment, facing homelessness, are pregnant or parenting, have chronic absenteeism or truancy issues, are transitioning between school and treatment programs, foster care, or the juvenile justice system, are at high-risk for dropping out of school, and have other behavioral and mental health challenges. School social workers ensure equitable access and culturally responsive services for all students and families, maximizing

students' success in school and improving school culture, climate and safety. The study focuses on assessing academic stress among individuals with learning disabilities. The aim is to understand the extent to which learning disabilities contribute to stress in an academic setting. This topic is important as it addresses the potential challenges and pressures faced by individuals with learning disabilities in their educational journey.

The study might benefit from grounding its investigation in existing stress and coping theories. By contextualizing the experiences of individuals with learning disabilities within established stress models, such as Lazarus and Folkman's Transactional Model of Stress and Coping, the study could provide a stronger theoretical foundation. Such an approach could help highlight the unique stressors, appraisals, and coping strategies specific to this population. The study's methodology should be critically evaluated. It's important to ensure that the assessment tools used to measure academic stress are suitable and validated for individuals with learning disabilities. Additionally, the study's sample size, diversity, and representativeness play a significant role in the generalizability of its findings. If the sample is limited in scope, it may impact the study's ability to draw broader conclusions.

Role of social workers in school

Enhancing Well-Being Through School Social Work: In a study conducted recently, researchers (Johnson, A. R., Smith, L. M. 2022) explored the crucial role of social workers in school settings. They highlighted how these professionals act as bridges between students, families, and communities. The study delved into the multifaceted responsibilities of school social workers, including providing emotional support to troubled students, promoting positive school environments, and fostering effective communication between various stakeholders. By emphasizing their role in enhancing well-being, the research underscored the significance of school social workers in nurturing students' holistic development.

School Social Work and Inclusive Education

In another recent study, (Williams, J. C., Martinez, E. M 2021.) researchers investigated the intersection of school social work and inclusive education. The study highlighted how social workers play a pivotal role in ensuring that all students, regardless of their abilities or backgrounds, have equal access to educational opportunities. These professionals advocate for inclusive practices, provide individualized support to students with special needs, and collaborate with educators to create inclusive classroom environments. By bridging the gap between theory and practice, the research showcased how school social workers contribute to fostering inclusive educational spaces.

School Social Work's Evolving Landscape

A recent exploration of the landscape of school social work by Thompson, R. L., Davis, K. M.

In the year 2023 shed light on its transformation over the years. Researchers examined the historical development of the profession, from its early roots as visiting

teachers to its present role as therapeutic and clinical practitioners. The study discussed how school social workers shifted their focus from addressing adverse conditions to providing emotional support for students. This evolution marked a significant change in the way school social workers engage with students, families, and schools, reflecting the dynamic nature of the profession.

As part of a coordinated system of Student Services, School Social Workers assist students in making better use of their school experience. The services primarily address the needs of those students experiencing social, emotional, learning and behavioral difficulties in the school setting. A school social worker is a vital asset to the school community: a link between students, parents, school staff and the school administration. The role of a school social worker involves wearing many hats, including truancy officer, case manager, student and parent advocate, student mediator, counsellor and distributor of resources. Typically, they are the only social worker on site, and they serve a unique role within their schools.

Some of the services school social workers provide include:

- Advocating for the child and mobilizing family, school and community resources to enable the child to learn as effectively as possible.
- Participating in special education assessment meetings as well as individual educational planning meetings.
- Working with problems in a child's living situation that affect the child's adjustment in school.
- Preparing a social or developmental history on a child with a disability.
- Helping develop positive behavioral intervention strategies.
- Helping with conflict resolution and anger management.
- Helping alleviate family stress.
- Helping parents access programs available to students with special needs and school and community resources.
- Assessing students with mental health concerns.
- Developing staff training programs.
- Assisting teachers with behavior management.
- Helping school districts get support from social and mental health agencies.
- Identifying and reporting child abuse and neglect.

School social workers are also hired by school administration to support students who struggle with mental health, behavior or emotional problems. They help clear obstacles to social and academic success and give students the tools they need to excel in school.

Research indicates between 18-20 percent of students have mental health issues significant enough to cause impairment to major life functions yet only one in receives

the necessary services (Seligman, 2007) Furthermore, certain students, including students with disabilities, students of colour, and students from low-income families, are at greater risk for mental health challenges, but are even less likely to receive the appropriate services (Vera, Buhin, & Shin, 2006). Students with untreated mental health issues may develop more significant problems which can greatly impact their educational experience and result in poor educational outcomes and possibly dropping out of school. School social workers design and implement school-based programs to promote a positive school climate among all students. They work with the entire student body to identify students in need of more intensive interventions and connect these students to additional services in the community where needed. School social workers serve as a resource to the principal and other educators, providing consultation and training on identifying students with mental health needs and a referral process when services are sought. Working more closely with individual students and their families, school social workers also create a bridge between the school and the community when linking such services. This coordination is critical in a successful school and community partnership to maximize limited resources, facilitate better service delivery, and maintain communication between partners (Lakshmi, 2014).

Research questions

1. What is the socio-economic context of the participants under investigation?
2. How can we comprehend the levels of academic stress experienced by children who have learning difficulties?
3. What are the challenges faced by individuals with learning difficulties that warrant exploration?

Hypothesis

1. There is no relationship between socio-economic status and learning difficulties
2. There is no relationship between academic stress and learning difficulties of the children

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The present study was carried out in Shivamogga city of Karnataka state, Shivamogga district is the gateway for Malnadu region where comparatively scattered villages numbers are more hence enrolment of students after PUC in their villages is big challenge in Shivamogga hence researcher selected this city as study area, researcher has adopted a descriptive research design. In Shivamogga city 120 high schools 60 PU colleges and 38434 girls and 40353 Boys students were pursuing high school and PUC hence the researcher collected 61 samples with convenience and purposeful sample techniques. For the present study, both primary and secondary data were collected. The primary data for the present study was collected with the help of Dr. Poorva Jain and Neelam Dikshit Academic Stress Scale which intends to measure Academic Stress. It is based on five points Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree- by the following sequence: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree

(A), Undecided (UD), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) respectively. It consists of 28 items, pertaining to the issues related to academic failure. Along with standardized tool researcher used self-prepared questionnaire also and the secondary data was collected from various books, journals, reports, articles and internet sources. The collected data were computed and analysed with the help of SPSS software. Data was subjected to test of normalcy and for inferential statistics t-test and correlation test was used. The major limitation of the study is, that study was conducted in only one city hence the findings of the study cannot be generalized.

Table 1. Sample determination

High Schools and PU college	Total High school and colleges	Government	Private	Aided	Total Number of Students	
					Girls	Boys
High Schools	511	41	160	144	38434	40353

Sources: DDPI and BEO office Shivamogga District.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis and Interpretation

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Stress	61	28.00	116.00	69.7541	21.91016
Valid (listwise)	N 61				

Total sample size for the study was 61 participants out of which 30 students are normal high school students and 31 are children with learning with disability. The average scores in academic stress was 69.7541 with maximum score of 116.00 and minimum score of 28.00 and with the std deviation of 21.91016.

Table 3. Tests of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	Df	Sig.	Statistic	Df	Sig.
Stress	.100	61	.200*	.967	61	.096

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Since Shapiro-Wilk Test of normality shows that the significance value is greater than 0.05 it means that data is normally distributed hence we use a parametric test.

Table 4. Group Statistics

	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Stress	Normal students	31	77.4839	13.26617	2.38268
	Learning disability	30	61.7667	26.10150	4.76546

It shows that there is a significant difference in stress level between normal children of high school and children who have learning disabilities. As per the collected data we can clearly see that the stress level in normal students or children of high school age.

Hypothesis test:

Since the significance value is less than 0.05 there is a significant difference hence we reject the null hypothesis.

Table 5. Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test t-test for Equality of Means for Equality of Variances								
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower		Upper
stress	Equal variances assumed	22.344	.000	2.979	59	.004	15.71720	5.27581	5.16032	26.27408
	Equal variances not assumed			2.950	42.730	.005	15.71720	5.32792	4.97046	26.46395

Suggestion for the Social Work Practice

All schools must appoint psychiatric Social Workers as counsellor: As findings shows that majority of the students suffering from psychiatric issues related to academic stress and family pressure regarding their studies, Hence if the schools would appointed the social workers with their professional competencies and experience they can help the peer to overcome their psychiatric problems and it effects on their academic achievements.

Teachers must be trained on how to develop the self – esteem and timely training must be conduct to the all teachers for diagnosis the problems of students

For parents workshops and awareness must be organized in the schools on how to develop the self – esteem and motivate their chid.

Social Work Implications

There is an inherent barrier between social workers and looking after children and young people. This has been formed over time because of a number of factors, firstly the turnover of staff makes it near impossible for children and young people to form relationships with the social worker, reducing their confidence in discussing issues that may be of great concern to them. The status alone of a social worker’s can

prevent some children from wanting to discuss matters because of the societal stigma attached to having a social worker. The stigma is not something that social workers alone as professionals can eliminate, society can and only when society accepts that social workers are doing positive work, and start to learn about the positive work they are doing, through the media and other resources. Then we can start to break down the stigma attached to social workers and enable all individuals to have the confidence of discussing issues with their social worker.

Social Work in Micro and Mezzo Level Implementation

This is the most common type of social work and involves direct interaction with clients to address individual problems. Common examples of micro-level work include helping people find housing, health care and social services.

While micro-social work happens on an individual level, mezzo-level social work zooms out to look at groups instead of individuals. Of course, the smallest "group" is the family unit, but mezzo-social work extends far beyond that. Many practitioners use micro and mezzo social work simultaneously to solve problems in businesses, schools, organizations and communities.

Social Work in Macro-Level Implementation

Macro-level social work involves interventions and advocacy on a large scale, affecting entire communities, states or even countries. It helps clients by intervening in large systems that may seem beyond the reach of individuals. For many people unfamiliar with the field, macro-level work may not even be recognizable as social work. Macro social workers may be involved in crafting laws or petitioning local, state or even federal governments for funds to help communities. They may also organize state- or nationwide activist campaigns.

4. CONCLUSION

Study on academic stress among students and among children having learning disabilities This research is very important because it plays a very important role in describing the stress level among the students of high school and among children having learning disabilities so we can see the academic stress among the high school students is very high and comparatively in children having learning disabilities is less and studying that why they have more stress and finding solutions for the high stress and because they have lot to study and in less time and they will have many criteria for high stress and especially in this generation students face lot of stress and it creates much more problems in their academic life.

Poor mental health awareness, limited school and other community-based services combine to make adolescents an underserved population in our country. The combination of ignored psychosocial problems and the lack of mental health services in our country amplifies the risk of precipitating academic underachievement and rising delinquent behavior among adolescents. There is a need to raise public awareness about the prevalence of these often "hidden" emotional disorders in Indian adolescents. Therefore there is a great need for social workers in the school setting and

they only can address all the adolescent's issues better than the teachers. But unfortunately in India, no social workers in public schools and there is only a prevalence of problems are also more and not addressed by anyone.

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