



## Impact of academic stress and parental support on learning outcomes of senior secondary students: A review

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### Abstract

Senior secondary students often experience heightened academic stress due to increased curricular demands, competitive examinations, and high expectations from parents and schools. When it comes to students' emotional health, academic engagement, and learning results, parental support is paramount. This review study takes a look at how academic pressure and parental encouragement affect children's performance in high school by combining previous studies on the topic. Findings from prior studies indicate that excessive academic stress adversely affects students' cognitive functioning, motivation, emotional health, and academic performance. Conversely, constructive parental involvement characterized by emotional support, academic guidance, and balanced expectations can buffer the negative effects of stress and enhance students' resilience and achievement. The review also identifies key moderating factors such as self-efficacy, socioeconomic status, teacher support, and peer influence. Furthermore, significant gaps in longitudinal, cultural, and intervention-based research are highlighted. The paper concludes by emphasizing the need for collaborative efforts among parents, educators, and policymakers to promote supportive learning environments and holistic student development.

**Keywords:** Academic stress, parental support, learning outcomes, senior secondary students, academic achievement, student well-being

### Introduction

An important developmental milestone in the academic and social lives of teenagers occurs when they move on to senior secondary school. During this period, students experience a rapid increase in academic demands, the introduction of complex subject matter, and exposure to high-stakes examinations, all of which contribute to an intensification of learning-related pressures (Putwain, 2007; Misra & McKean, 2000) <sup>[10, 13]</sup>. Adolescents are simultaneously navigating social and emotional development, making them particularly sensitive to stressors arising from parental expectations, teacher evaluations, and peer comparisons (Eccles *et al.*, 1993). These cumulative pressures often manifest as academic stress, characterized by heightened anxiety, decreased concentration, emotional exhaustion, and in severe cases, burnout (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Pascoe *et al.*, 2020) <sup>[9, 12]</sup>. Research has shown that academic stress significantly hinders students' ability to learn. It has detrimental effects on their emotional health, motivation, and participation in learning activities, in addition to cognitive skills like memory, attention, and problem-solving (Misra & McKean, 2000; Putwain, 2007) <sup>[10, 13]</sup>.

Concurrently, parental support plays a critical role in shaping adolescents' educational experiences. This support encompasses emotional encouragement, active involvement in academic activities, guidance in study strategies, and the provision of resources necessary for learning (Fan & Chen, 2001; Hill & Tyson, 2009) <sup>[4, 6]</sup>. There is empirical evidence that students who feel their parents have their back are more resilient, motivated, and confident, which can buffer the detrimental effects of academic stress (Castro *et al.*, 2015; Kapali, 2019) <sup>[1, 3]</sup>. Emotional encouragement and constructive guidance by parents have been shown to foster positive attitudes toward learning, promote adaptive coping

strategies, and enhance overall academic performance, particularly during periods of intense academic pressure (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994) <sup>[5]</sup>.

Understanding the dual influence of academic stress and parental support is critical for developing evidence-based strategies aimed at enhancing educational outcomes and promoting adolescent well-being. By examining the sources, effects, and interactions of academic stress and parental support, educators, parents, and policymakers can implement targeted interventions to foster resilience, self-regulation, and sustained academic engagement. This review synthesizes research findings on the impact of academic stress and parental involvement on the learning outcomes of senior secondary students, explores moderating factors that influence these relationships, and highlights practical recommendations for educational practice and policy.

### Academic Stress in Senior Secondary Students

The senior secondary stage is widely recognized as a critical period in adolescent education, where students experience intensified academic demands and pressures. Students' cognitive, emotional, and behavioral performance can be greatly affected by academic stress, which is generally a result of a combination of a complicated curriculum, high-stakes exams, and social expectations (Putwain, 2007; Misra & McKean, 2000) <sup>[10, 13]</sup>. Understanding the sources and impacts of academic stress is crucial for educators, parents, and policymakers seeking to optimize learning outcomes.

#### 1. Definition and Sources of Academic Stress

Academic stress can be defined as the psychological and emotional strain that occurs when students perceive that academic demands exceed their coping resources (Lazarus

& Folkman, 1984)<sup>[9]</sup>. It is a multidimensional construct encompassing cognitive appraisal of challenges, emotional reactions such as anxiety, and behavioral responses such as avoidance or withdrawal. Stress in adolescents has been linked not only to the intensity of academic tasks but also to students' perceptions of their ability to meet expectations (Misra & McKean, 2000)<sup>[10]</sup>.

Common sources of academic stress among senior secondary students include

### 1.1 High Expectations from Parents and Teachers:

Adolescents often face pressure to achieve top grades from parents and teachers, which can lead to performance anxiety and fear of disappointing significant adults (Fan & Chen, 2001)<sup>[4]</sup>. Excessive parental pressure, especially when combined with limited emotional support, has been shown to exacerbate stress levels (Zhou & Xin, 2003).

### 1.2 Exam-Related Pressure and Fear of Failure:

The emphasis on board examinations and competitive entrance tests in senior secondary education can induce severe anxiety. Test anxiety is a well-documented form of academic stress, leading to physiological symptoms such as increased heart rate, sweating, and cognitive disturbances like impaired concentration (Putwain, 2007)<sup>[13]</sup>.

### 1.3 Heavy Homework and Curriculum Workload:

An excessive amount of assignments and a densely packed syllabus can overwhelm students, leaving insufficient time for rest, recreation, and holistic development (Misra & McKean, 2000)<sup>[10]</sup>. Continuous academic demands without adequate recovery periods increase the risk of burnout.

### 1.4 Peer Competition and Comparison:

Social comparisons and competitive classroom environments can intensify feelings of inadequacy. Students may experience stress when evaluating their performance against peers, particularly in high-achieving schools where academic success is highly valued (Pascoe *et al.*, 2020)<sup>[12]</sup>.

### 1.5 Time Management Challenges and Extracurricular Demands:

Balancing academics with extracurricular activities, personal commitments, and social life can be particularly challenging for adolescents. Poor time management and overcommitment often result in fatigue, decreased efficiency, and heightened stress (Misra & McKean, 2000)<sup>[10]</sup>.

Overall, academic stress arises not only from objective workload but also from subjective perceptions of pressure, expectations, and personal coping resources. Recognizing these sources is critical for designing interventions to reduce stress and promote student well-being.

## 2. Effects of Academic Stress on Learning Outcomes

Empirical research consistently demonstrates that academic stress can adversely affect students' learning outcomes, influencing cognitive performance, emotional health, and behavior (Pascoe *et al.*, 2020; Putwain, 2007)<sup>[12, 13]</sup>.

**2.1 Cognitive Effects:** Stress negatively impacts attention, memory retention, and executive functioning, leading to reduced problem-solving ability and slower information processing. Chronic academic stress has been linked to impaired working memory and lower academic performance in tasks requiring concentration and reasoning (Misra & McKean, 2000; Putwain, 2007)<sup>[10, 13]</sup>.

**2.2 Emotional Effects:** Low self-esteem, anxiety, and depression symptoms are linked to high levels of academic stress. These emotional disturbances diminish engagement in learning activities, reduce motivation, and contribute to feelings of helplessness, ultimately affecting academic achievement (Putwain, 2007; Pascoe *et al.*, 2020)<sup>[12, 13]</sup>.

**2.3 Behavioral Effects:** Stress can manifest behaviorally through procrastination, absenteeism, and avoidance of challenging tasks. According to Pascoe *et al.* (2020)<sup>[12]</sup>, students who experience chronic stress may show signs of lower class involvement, incomplete assignments, and disengagement from the learning process. As a result, their academic performance can suffer.

It is crucial to recognize and address stress in high school seniors at an early stage because it can have far-reaching effects on students' mental health, adaptive coping mechanisms, and general welfare, not to mention the obvious effects on their grades and test scores (Misra & McKean, 2000; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984)<sup>[9, 10]</sup>.

### Parental Support and Involvement

Parental support and involvement have long been recognized as critical determinants of adolescent academic success. Depending on the level of parental involvement, pupils in senior secondary school may be better prepared to handle the rising academic demands placed on them (Fan & Chen, 2001; Hill & Tyson, 2009)<sup>[4, 6]</sup>. Students' motivation, study habits, and educational results are shaped by the emotional, instrumental, and behavioral elements of parental participation, which extend beyond academic aid (Castro *et al.*, 2015)<sup>[3]</sup>.

#### 1. Dimensions of Parental Support

Research has identified several key dimensions of parental support, each contributing uniquely to students' learning experiences

**1.1 Emotional Support:** Emotional support involves expressing care, encouragement, empathy, and reassurance during academic challenges (Hill & Tyson, 2009). Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994)<sup>[5, 6]</sup> found that students whose parents they felt emotionally supported were less anxious, better able to handle stress, and more dedicated to their studies. The negative impacts of academic stress can be lessened, resilience can be strengthened, and self-efficacy can be increased with the help of emotional support.

**1.2 Instrumental Support:** Instrumental support refers to tangible assistance provided by parents, such as study materials, access to technology, structured study

spaces, and financial resources that facilitate learning (Fan & Chen, 2001) <sup>[4]</sup>. This form of support enables students to focus on learning without being hindered by logistical or environmental constraints, directly impacting the quality of study and performance outcomes.

**1.3 Academic Guidance:** Academic guidance encompasses monitoring homework, assisting with study strategies, clarifying concepts, and discussing educational goals with students (Hill & Tyson, 2009) <sup>[6]</sup>. When students are actively involved in their education, they are better able to form healthy study habits, establish attainable academic objectives, and take the initiative to learn. Such involvement has been associated with improved grades and higher achievement scores across subjects (Castro *et al.*, 2015) <sup>[3]</sup>.

**1.4 Behavioral Modeling:** Parents serve as role models for learning behaviors, discipline, and attitudes toward education (Hill & Tyson, 2009) <sup>[6]</sup>. Children often internalize parents' study habits, work ethics, and problem-solving approaches. Positive modeling reinforces intrinsic motivation, responsibility, and a proactive approach toward learning.

Involvement of parents in their children's education affects students' academic performance in all of these interconnected dimensions. For example, emotional support enhances the effectiveness of academic guidance, while behavioral modeling reinforces the adoption of study strategies and disciplined routines.

## 2. Impact on Learning Outcomes

Extensive research indicates that parental involvement significantly influences students' learning outcomes, both directly and indirectly

**2.1 Enhanced Motivation:** Supportive parental engagement fosters intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Encouragement, goal-setting discussions, and recognition of effort help students persist in the face of academic challenges, thereby enhancing learning engagement and achievement (Fan & Chen, 2001) <sup>[4]</sup>.

**2.2 Improved Study Habits:** Parental involvement aids in structuring study routines, organizing time effectively, and promoting systematic learning strategies. Such structured support has been linked to better homework completion, time management, and overall academic performance (Hill & Tyson, 2009) <sup>[6]</sup>.

**2.3 Emotional Regulation:** Parents who are there emotionally for their adolescents regularly help their children manage anxiety, deal with academic pressure, and stay focused on tests. Emotional regulation facilitated by parental involvement contributes to cognitive efficiency and resilience in learning contexts (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Castro *et al.*, 2015) <sup>[3, 5]</sup>.

**2.4 Academic Achievement:** Empirical evidence demonstrates a strong positive relationship between

parental involvement and measurable academic outcomes, including grades, test scores, and examination performance. Meta-analytic studies indicate that students with highly involved parents outperform peers with less parental support, even after controlling for socioeconomic status and school quality (Fan & Chen, 2001; Castro *et al.*, 2015) <sup>[3, 4]</sup>.

However, it is crucial to note that excessive or controlling PI, often characterized by overemphasis on results without emotional support, can lead to increased academic stress and diminished student autonomy (Kapali, 2019) <sup>[1]</sup>. The effectiveness of parental involvement is therefore contingent upon a balanced approach that combines emotional support, guidance, and autonomy promotion.

### Interaction of Academic Stress and Parental Support

Students' performance in high school is affected by a complicated interplay between academic pressure and family support, neither of which operates independently. Students' cognitive, emotional, and behavioral functioning can be buffered by parental support, according to empirical studies (Kapali, 2019) <sup>[8]</sup>. For instance, adolescents experiencing high levels of academic pressure but perceiving consistent emotional and instrumental support from parents often exhibit greater resilience, higher levels of intrinsic drive and better academic achievement as contrasted with their non-supported peers. This interaction underscores the role of parental involvement as a protective factor that helps students cope effectively with stressors in high-stakes academic environments (Fan & Chen, 2001; Castro *et al.*, 2015) <sup>[3, 4]</sup>.

### Specifically, supportive parents can

- Help students develop adaptive coping strategies to manage stress, such as time management, goal-setting, and relaxation techniques.
- Provide encouragement and reassurance, reducing anxiety associated with examinations or high expectations.
- Monitor progress without imposing excessive pressure, thereby promoting autonomy alongside accountability.

Conversely, excessive parental pressure without adequate emotional support may amplify academic stress, contributing to negative outcomes such as heightened anxiety, avoidance behaviors, and decreased academic performance (Kapali, 2019) <sup>[1]</sup>. Studies emphasize that the quality and style of parental involvement rather than mere frequency or intensity determine whether parental engagement alleviates or exacerbates stress (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994) <sup>[5]</sup>. For example, parents who are overly controlling or critical may increase students' fear of failure, undermining motivation and self-confidence.

Overall, the interaction between academic stress & parental support highlights the need for a balanced approach, where parents provide guidance, resources, and encouragement while fostering self-efficacy and independence in adolescents. Such balanced involvement not only buffers the negative effects of stress but also enhances learning engagement and achievement outcomes.

### Moderating Factors

There are a number of other factors that impact the association between academic stress and parental support,

while parental support can alleviate some of the negative impacts. Studies show that parental involvement and stress have different effects on children's development depending on a variety of psychological, social, and environmental factors:

- 1. Student Self-Efficacy:** An important component of stress resistance is students' self-efficacy, which is their confidence in their own abilities to complete academic assignments successfully. Bandura (1997) and Schunk and DiBenedetto (2020) <sup>[2, 15]</sup> found that adolescents who had high levels of self-efficacy were better equipped to deal with scholastic difficulties, stay motivated, and make good use of parental support. Conversely, students with low self-efficacy may experience heightened stress and derive less benefit from parental guidance.
- 2. Socioeconomic Status (SES):** SES influences the quality and type of parental involvement. Families with higher educational attainment and greater economic resources are often able to provide enriched learning environments, access to private tutoring, and structured academic guidance (Fan & Chen, 2001; Castro *et al.*, 2015) <sup>[3, 4]</sup>. Lower SES may limit parents' capacity to engage fully in academic support, potentially moderating the effectiveness of their involvement.
- 3. Teacher Support:** Collaborative support from teachers complements parental involvement and can buffer academic stress. Teachers who provide guidance, constructive feedback, and emotional encouragement can reinforce positive learning behaviors, thereby enhancing the combined effect of parental support (Wentzel, 1998; Roorda *et al.*, 2011) <sup>[14, 17]</sup>. The alignment of teacher and parent support creates a cohesive environment that promotes academic resilience.
- 4. Peer Influence:** Peer interactions significantly affect how students perceive and manage academic stress. Positive peer networks can provide social support, shared study strategies, and collaborative learning opportunities, buffering stress. Conversely, highly competitive or unsupportive peer environments may exacerbate stress and undermine the benefits of parental support (Wentzel, 2005) <sup>[18]</sup>.

These moderating factors emphasize that academic outcomes are shaped by a dynamic interplay of individual, familial, and social influences. Understanding these variables is essential for designing interventions that target not only students and parents but also the broader educational ecosystem to enhance learning outcomes under conditions of academic stress.

### Literature Review

Insaideo, S.O. *et al.* (2022) <sup>[7]</sup> Researchers in Ghana's Central Region focused on secondary school students in the AAK District. Concurrent triangulation was the foundation of the mixed-methods technique utilized in the study. Using the proportionate stratified & simple random selection procedures proposed by Krecjie and Morgan, we were able to pick 338 children out of 2,885. The convenience sample

consisted of 160 parents, whereas the census sample consisted of four SHS principals. An interview guide & questionnaire were utilized to gather information. When examining quantitative data, we relied on simple linear multiple regression & means and standard deviations instead of themes, as we did when assessing qualitative data. When compared to the typical student (mean of 2.5), high school seniors were more inclined to view their parents' academic involvement in a good light (mean of 2.64). Compared to the national average of 2.5, parents in the AAK District had a positive view of their administrative function, with a mean assessment of 3.01. The academic demands of students, the building and maintenance of the school's physical plant, & monitoring of students' emotional and social well-being are just a few of the many extracurricular activities in which school administrators participate. Students' academic performance in the AAK District was greatly improved when parents were actively involved in school administration. If they want their children to succeed academically, parents should be involved in their school lives, according to the research investigators. The school administration is obligated to inform parents regarding the academic achievement of their children.

Dr. Mubarak Singh *et al.* (2021) <sup>[16]</sup> This paper set out to reaction the query, "How does parental involvement affect the academic performance of high school seniors?" by looking at gender and regional differences. Specifically, 120 high school students from the Jammu tehsil were elected at random to contribute in the present research. Findings from the eleventh-grade exam were utilized to examine academic achievement, and data were obtained utilizing a parental engagement measure that was established by Vijay Laxmi Chauhan and Gunjan Ganotra Arora (2008). There were no discernible variations in parental participation or academic achievement between rural & urban secondary school seniors. Nonetheless, there were statistically significant gender gaps on these assessments between students in urban and rural regions. Both urban & rural high school seniors' academic performance was found to be enhanced when parents were involved, the study found.

Jerald C. Moneva *et al.* (2020) <sup>[11]</sup> For a person to have a sufficient degree of self-respect, they must have faith in their own merit and confidence in their own talents. As an alternative, parental participation encapsulates the degree to which parents support their children in their academic and extracurricular endeavors. In this school-based analysis, the researchers set out to find a correlation. We examined the relationship between parental participation and children's self-esteem in this descriptive correlational study. The sample for this study is the senior class of Jagobiao National High School. Following data collection from the structured questionnaire, the researchers utilized the chi-square test to analyze the association between the dependent and independent variables. As a general rule, children who performed better in school had more self-esteem, which in turn increased their confidence levels. Students' feelings of self-worth were positively correlated with PI, according to the study. A child's self-assurance increased when they received consistent praise and affirmation from their parents. Students' self-esteem and academic achievement were both positively affected by PI.

Dwi Izhaty Afriandani *et al.* (2019) <sup>[1]</sup> The significance of this investigation is to inspect the academic stress levels of students living in urban & rural regions by looking at how

PI impacts their academic self-concept. One hundred twenty-seven eighth graders participated in the investigation, hailing from four different schools in Rumpin, Ciseeng, Kota Bogor, and Rumpin (SMPN 1, SMPN 4, & SMPN 9). There were 109 people from the countryside and 118 people from the city. Both the study's setting and its sample were carefully selected. Following the gathering of data from the self-report survey, many statistical techniques were utilized to evaluate it, such as analyses of correlation, independent t-tests, or multiple linear regression. This investigation found that academic stress or PI are both greater in urban areas, contrasting to rural ones. Furthermore, academic stress is significantly correlated negatively with academic self-concept. When looking at home-school communication, extracurricular activities, and school-related tasks, there is a negative association between group study and stress results; however, there is no substantial correlation between parental engagement & academic stress overall. Parental involvement has little impact on academic stress among rural or urban adolescents, although gender and family wealth have a beneficial effect. Academic self-concept has a negative effect.

### **Gaps in Literature**

Despite the substantial body of research examining academic stress and parental support, several important gaps remain that warrant further scholarly attention.

**Limited Longitudinal Research:** Most existing studies employ cross-sectional designs, which restrict the ability to determine causal relationships or long-term developmental trends. There is a lack of longitudinal research tracking students over extended periods to examine how sustained academic stress and varying levels of parental support influence long-term academic achievement, psychological well-being, and career trajectories. Understanding these long-term effects is essential for developing preventive and developmental interventions.

**Insufficient Focus on Cultural Variations:** While parental involvement has been widely studied, relatively few investigations explore how cultural norms, values, and parenting styles shape the nature and effectiveness of parental support. Cultural contexts significantly influence expectations regarding academic success, discipline, autonomy, and communication patterns. Comparative cross-cultural studies are needed to better understand how parental involvement operates in diverse sociocultural settings, particularly in non-Western educational contexts.

**Limited Evidence on Intervention Strategies:** While several studies have shown that parental support can help alleviate academic stress, there is a lack of research that actually evaluates formal intervention programs. Few studies systematically assess school-based stress management initiatives, parent education programs, or integrated family-school collaboration models designed to balance academic pressure with emotional support. Rigorous experimental and quasi-experimental research is necessary to identify evidence-based strategies that effectively promote academic resilience and healthy parental engagement.

Educational policies & practices that aim to improve students' learning outcomes and well-being could benefit from a more thorough and culturally sensitive knowledge of the relationship between academic stress & parental support if these gaps were filled.

### **Implications for Practice and Policy**

The results of this review highlight important practical and policy-oriented implications for fostering balanced academic development and student well-being in senior secondary education.

**Implications for Parents:** When it comes to their children's education, parents have a significant impact. Rather than emphasizing performance outcomes alone, parents should adopt a supportive and autonomy-promoting approach that balances guidance with emotional encouragement. Constructive involvement such as discussing academic goals, assisting with time management, and recognizing effort rather than only results can enhance students' intrinsic motivation and resilience. Importantly, parents should remain attentive to signs of excessive stress, including withdrawal, irritability, or declining academic engagement. Promoting open communication, emotional reassurance, and a healthy study-life balance contributes significantly to students' psychological well-being and sustained academic success.

**Implications for Educators:** Teachers and school administrators are strategically positioned to identify early indicators of academic stress. Schools should establish mechanisms for monitoring students' emotional and academic adjustment through mentoring systems, periodic counseling sessions, and feedback channels. It is absolutely necessary for educators and families to work together in order to guarantee that students receive continuous support in both the home and institutional settings. Professional development programs can equip teachers with strategies to reduce classroom-related stress, adopt student-centered pedagogies, and foster supportive teacher-student relationships that enhance engagement and confidence.

**Policy Recommendations:** At the policy level, educational authorities should integrate structured stress management and socio-emotional learning programs into senior secondary curricula. Schools should be mandated to provide accessible counseling services staffed by trained professionals. Additionally, parent education workshops can help families understand healthy involvement practices and the psychological impact of excessive academic pressure. Policymakers should prioritize a holistic education framework that values mental health, resilience-building, and balanced achievement rather than examination performance alone.

Overall, coordinated efforts among parents, educators, and policymakers are essential to create supportive educational ecosystems that promote both academic excellence and adolescent well-being.

### **Conclusion**

Academic stress and parental support are significant and interconnected determinants of learning outcomes among senior secondary students. The review concludes that students' motivation, emotional stability, cognitive functioning, and overall academic achievement are all adversely affected by high academic pressure. Negative effects on mental health and academic performance may result from chronic stress. On the other hand, when parents are involved in a healthy way by providing emotional support, academic direction, and autonomy support their

children are better able to handle stress, which in turn increases their resilience, self-efficacy, and long-term success. The interaction between these variables highlights the importance of maintaining equilibrium between high academic expectations and emotional well-being. Additionally, moderating factors such as self-efficacy, socioeconomic status, teacher support, and peer influence further shape students' experiences and outcomes. Overall, promoting collaborative efforts among families, schools, and policymakers is essential to create supportive educational environments that encourage both academic excellence and holistic adolescent development.

### Implications

1. It helps make sure that treatment is safe and effective, and it also makes it less likely that more people in a community will start using drugs.
2. It reduces the potential for relapse as patients become aware of risky people, places, and situations.
3. It helps to avoid these things or learn how to deal with some of the things that can cause a relapse.

### The Way Forward

The following would help contain the rising consumption of illicit drugs

1. Non-formal education programs for the reduction of illicit drugs should be responsive and inclusive.
2. Training and teaching in drug education will enhance the impact and sustainability of illicit drug prevention programs.
3. Drug education campaigns and programs should be encouraged in every local government area.
4. School-based drug education should be encouraged.
5. Community-based drug education should be championed.

### Conclusion

All organized educational activities that take place outside the formally established system are considered non-formal education. It is not a replacement for formal education. It guarantees the right of all to access education. Non-formal in this context refers to all organized activities aimed at raising awareness about illicit drugs and discouraging their use, which will invariably promote economic sustainability.

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