

## **News & Views**

# **The Impact of Stress on Education: Understanding the Consequences and Finding Solutions**

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Stress and education are intricately linked, with the pressure to perform well academically often taking a toll on students' mental and emotional well-being. Chronic stress can have severe consequences on students' cognitive, emotional, and social development, ultimately affecting their academic achievement and overall quality of life.

### **Causes of Stress in Education**

1. Academic Pressure: High expectations from parents, teachers, and peers can create undue stress.
2. Excessive Homework: Overwhelming assignments and deadlines can lead to burnout.
3. Standardized Testing: High-stakes exams can cause anxiety and stress.
4. Social Comparisons: Comparing oneself to peers can foster competition and stress.
5. Time Management: Balancing academics, extracurricular activities, and social life can be overwhelming.

### **Effects of Stress on Education**

1. Decreased Motivation: Stress can lead to disengagement and lack of interest in learning.
2. Impaired Cognitive Function: Stress can affect memory, concentration, and problem-solving skills.
3. Emotional Distress: Stress can lead to anxiety, depression, and mood swings.
4. Physical Health Consequences: Stress can cause headaches, fatigue, and sleep disturbances.
5. Reduced Academic Performance: Chronic stress can negatively impact grades and academic achievement.

### **Strategies to Manage Stress in Education**

1. Time Management: Prioritize tasks, set realistic goals, and take regular breaks.
2. Seek Support: Talk to teachers, counselors, or parents about stress and concerns.
3. Relaxation Techniques: Practice mindfulness, meditation, or deep breathing exercises.

4. Physical Activity: Engage in regular exercise to reduce stress and improve mood.
5. Reframe Thinking: Focus on learning, not just grades, and celebrate small achievements.

### **Educational Institutions' Role**

1. Promote Stress-Reducing Initiatives\*: Offer mindfulness programs, counseling services, and stress-management workshops.
2. Foster Supportive Environment: Encourage open communication, empathy, and understanding.
3. Flexible Assessment Methods: Consider alternative assessment methods to reduce standardized testing stress.
4. Teacher Training: Educate teachers on stress recognition and support strategies.
5. Student-Centered Approach: Prioritize student well-being and academic success.

Accordingly to a research, secondary/high school (defined here as junior/lower secondary education and senior/upper secondary education)] (UNESCO, Citation2012) and tertiary (defined here as post-secondary education) (UNESCO, Citation2012) it was self-report by students experiencing ongoing stress relating to their education, which we refer to as academic-related stress, such as pressure to achieve high marks and concerns about receiving poor grades. For example, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) recently conducted a survey involving 72 countries and consisting of 540,000 student respondents aged 15–16 years. On average across OECD countries, 66% of students reported feeling stressed about poor grades and 59% reported that they often worry that taking a test will be difficult. The OECD further found that 55% of students feel very anxious about school testing, even when they are well prepared. As many 37% of students reported feeling very tense when studying, with girls consistently reporting greater anxiety relating to schoolwork compared to boys (OECD, Citation2017). This data demonstrates that education and academic performance are a significant source of stress to students. The impact of this ongoing academic-related stress to student outcomes and well-being has not been comprehensively explored. Therefore, the current narrative review explores the impact of academic-related stress on students' academic performance, mental health and well-being.

### **Academic-related stress and mental health**

Previous research indicates that self-reported stress is associated with the presentation of anxious states and lower well-being (Carter, Garber, Ciesla, & Cole, Citation2006; Kessler, Citation1997; Robotham & Julian, Citation2006). The recent above-mentioned OECD survey reports that secondary students who self-report higher levels of academic-related stress also report lower well-being, measured using psychological, social, cognitive and physical components (OECD, Citation2015). A systematic review of 13 studies showed that in individuals undertaking higher education, self-reported levels of stress are associated with poorer quality of life and well-being (Ribeiro et al., Citation2017). Ongoing stress also precipitates the development of more serious mental health issues such as anxiety and depression (Kessler, Citation1997; Moylan, Maes, Wray, & Berk, Citation2013). The prevalence of anxiety is as high as 35% in tertiary students (Bayram & Bilgel, Citation2008; Eisenberg, Gollust, Golberstein, &

Hefner, Citation2007; Ozen, Ercan, Irgil, & Sigirli, Citation2010) and the prevalence of depression is 30% (Ibrahim, Kelly, Adams, & Glazebrook, Citation2013). The reciprocal relationship between stress and depression and anxiety is well established (Dantzer, Citation2012; Dantzer, O'Connor, Lawson, & Kelley, Citation2011; Maes, Citation2008). Indeed, major stressful life events are one of the best predictors of the onset of depression (Kendler et al., Citation1995; Kessler, Citation1997). Accordingly, in young people the first onset of depression is often preceded by major life stressors (Lewinsohn, Allen, Seeley, & Gotlib, Citation1999).

## **Conclusions**

Stress and education are intertwined, but by acknowledging the causes and effects of stress, we can work towards creating a more supportive and stress-reducing educational environment. By implementing effective stress-management strategies and promoting student well-being, we can empower students to succeed academically and thrive emotionally.

## **References**

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