

A study on

“The Impact of Academic Pressure on Stress Among High School Students”

A dissertation submitted to the department of Social Work for the partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of the degree of Master of Social Work



SUBMITTED TO

Department of Social Work

MSSV, Guwahati Unit

SUBMITTED BY:

Rajashree Hazarika

MSW 4th Semester

Roll No: MSW-10/23

Registration No: MSSV-0023-008-001426 Session: 2023-25

Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankaradeva Viswavidyalaya, Guwahati

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মহাপুরুষ শ্রীমন্ত শঙ্কৰদেৱ বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় MAHAPURUSHA SRIMANTA SANKARADEVA VISWAVIDYALAYA

[Recognized Under Section 2(f) of UGC Act, 1956]

GUWAHATI CONSTITUENT UNIT

Sankari Sanskriti Kendra, Rupnagar, Bhangagarh, Guwahati-781032, Assam

Department of Social Work

CERTIFICATE

I have the pleasure to certify that **Miss Rajashree Hazarika**, MSW 4th Semester student bearing Roll No: **MSW-10/23** with Registration No: **MSSV-0023-008-001426** of 2023, MSSV has successfully completed the dissertation entitled “A Study on Impact of academic stress among high school student.”

She has made a successful completion of this research by her own.

I wish her bright future.

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মহাপুরুষ শ্রীমন্ত শঙ্করদেব বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় MAHAPURUSHA SRIMANTA SANKARADEVA VISWAVIDYALAYA

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Department of Social Work

CERTIFICATE FROM SUPERVISOR

This is to certify that **Miss Rajashree Hazarika**, student of MSW 4th Semester bearing Roll No: **MSW-10/23** with Registration No: **MSSV-0023-008-001426** of **2023**, MSSV, Guwahati Unit has successfully carried out his dissertation entitled “**A Study on Impact of academic stress among high school student.**”, as a researcher under my supervision and guidance for the partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of the degree of **MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK (MSW)**.

The work reported in this research has not been submitted elsewhere and the facts presented here are true to the best of my knowledge.

I wish her all the very best for her future endeavour.

Place: MSSV, Guwahati unit

Date: **11/06/2025**


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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, **Miss Rajashree Hazarika**, student of 4th Semester, Department of Social Work, (Roll No. **MSW 10/23** and Registration No: **MSSV-0023-008-001426 of 2023**), Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankaradeva Viswavidyalaya, Guwahati Unit, hereby declare that the research study titled "**A Study on Impact of academic stress among high school student** " is my original work under the guidance of **Dr. Arpita Das**, Assistant Professor, Department of Social Work, MSSV, Guwahati Unit., and that all sources used in the study have been properly cited and acknowledged.

I affirm that this research study has not been previously submitted for academic credit or publication, nor has it been copied or plagiarized in whole or in part from any other source.

I confirm that all data collected for the research study has been obtained through ethical means, and that all participants involved in the study were informed about the purpose and nature of the research, and gave their informed consent to participate.

Rajashree Hazarika
11/06/2025
Rajashree Hazarika

Roll No. MSW 10/23

Registration No: MSSV-0023-008-001426

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the impact of academic stress on high school students, especially those in Class 10 in Guwahati. Academic stress has become a serious issue, often affecting the mental, emotional, and physical well-being of students. Many students struggle with pressure from parents, teachers, exams, comparisons, and a lack of proper support. The main objectives of this study were to understand the causes of academic pressure, how it affects students' mental health, and the different ways students cope with stress. A qualitative descriptive method was used for the research. In-depth interviews were conducted with 15 students from different backgrounds using a semi-structured interview schedule. The study found that students experience high levels of stress due to academic expectations, fear of failure, lack of time for hobbies, and no access to school counselors. Many students reported emotional struggles like anxiety, sleeplessness, sadness, and feeling unmotivated.

This research is important as it helps teachers, parents, and schools understand what students go through. It highlights the urgent need for emotional support and school-based counseling. The study concludes that creating a supportive school environment can reduce stress and help students perform better both academically and emotionally.

TABLE OF CONTENT

| CONTENT | PAGE NO |
|---|---------|
| Certificate of the Head of the Department | i |
| Certificate of the Supervisor | ii |
| Plagiarism Verification Certificate | iii |
| Declaration of Originality | iv |
| Acknowledgement | v |
| Abstract | vi |
| Chapter I- Introduction | |
| Introduction | |
| 1.1 Operational Definitions | 1-3 |
| 1.2 Statement of the problem | 3 |
| 1.3 Significance of the study | 4 |
| 1.4 Objectives of the study | 4-5 |
| 1.5 Research questions | 5 |
| Chapter II- Review of Literature | 5 |
| Chapter III- Research methodology | 6-18 |
| 3.1 Theoretical framework | 19 |
| 3.2 Research Design | 20-22 |
| 3.3 Universe of the study | 22-23 |
| 3.4 Sample technique | 23 |
| 3.5 Sample size | 23 |
| 3.6 Methods of Data Collection | 24 |
| 3.7 Source of data collection | 24 |
| 3.8 Tools of data collection | 24 |
| 3.9 Ethical consideration and consents | 24-25 |
| 3.10 Limitation | 25 |
| | 26 |

| | |
|---|-------|
| 3.11 Inclusion & Exclusion Criteria | 26 |
| Chapter IV- Data Analysis & Interpretation | 27 |
| 4.1: Parental expectations as a primary stressor emotional impact due to academic stress | 48 |
| 4.2: Emotional impact due to academic stress | 48-49 |
| 4.3: Lack of time for self-care and hobbies | 49 |
| 4.4: Fear of failure and self-doubt | 49-50 |
| 4.5: Lack of access to school counsellors and mental health support | 50 |
| 4.6: Lack of supportive school environment. | 50-51 |
| 4.7: Academic comparison and peer pressure | 51-52 |
| 4.8: Peer comparison and peer pressure | 52 |
| Chapter V- Discussions and Findings | 54-57 |
| Chapter VI- Conclusion& Suggestions | 58 |
| Conclusion | 59-60 |
| Suggestions | 61-62 |
| References | 63-65 |
| Appendix | 66 |

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Education is an important part of a student's life, but too much academic pressure can lead to stress and mental health issues like depression. High school students often face pressure from parents, teachers, and society to perform well in exams, complete assignments on time, and achieve high grades. This constant pressure can make them feel anxious, overwhelmed, and even sad. Many students struggle to balance their studies with other activities, leading to stress, lack of sleep, and loss of motivation. In some cases, extreme academic pressure can cause depression, affecting their overall well-being. It is important to understand how academic stress affects students and find ways to help them manage it. The pressure to perform well in exams, complete assignments, and meet deadlines can affect their mental health. Stress and depression can lower concentration, motivation, and self-confidence, impacting both academic and personal life. Several studies indicate that academic stress impacts students in various issues like anxiety, depression, and decreased self-esteem. Additionally, it can harm their physical wellbeing resulting in headache insomnia fatigue and shift in appetite. Stressed students might also exhibit changes in behaviour, such as increased irritability, social withdrawal and not interested in hobbies they previously loved also academic stress can diminish their motivation and self-confidence, making it more challenging for them to focus and succeed in their studies. It becomes a problem when students start feeling overwhelmed and anxious. Some students may also feel demotivated and begin to lose confidence in their abilities. When the mind is under too much stress, students find it hard to focus, study, or even enjoy learning. Many students also struggle to balance academics with extracurricular activities, family responsibilities, and social life. They may spend hours studying and still feel like it's not enough. Some students avoid talking about their stress because they fear being judged or misunderstood. Over time, this stress can affect both their academic performance and emotional well-being. It can also harm their relationships and social interactions. Several research studies have shown that high academic pressure can reduce students' self-esteem and increase anxiety and depression. It can also affect their physical health, leading to tiredness, stomach issues, or loss of appetite. The most serious cases may lead to long-term mental health problems. As academic expectations continue to rise, many students may feel that their efforts are never enough, no matter how hard they try. The fear of failure and the constant need to meet deadlines can create long-term stress, which affects their daily functioning. This type of pressure often remains unnoticed, as students may hesitate to express their feelings due to fear of judgment or lack of understanding from adults. In some cases, this silence can worsen their mental health.

conditions, leading to serious emotional struggles. Moreover, the academic system often focuses heavily on grades and performance, rather than the emotional well-being of students. When students are evaluated mainly by their academic outcomes, they may begin to link their self-worth to marks and results. This mindset can cause emotional harm, especially when students fall short of expectations. Therefore, it becomes essential to shift the focus from just academic performance to students' overall development and mental health.

This research aims to study the causes of academic stress and pressure among high school students. It will also explore how this stress affects their mental health, especially feelings of sadness, low motivation, and depression. And also, it will look at how students try to cope with stress, what strategies they use and whether these methods help or not. Understanding these problems is important so that teachers, parents, and schools can work together to create a supportive and stress-free environment. The main goal of this study is to find better ways to help students handle pressure and succeed in both their academic and personal lives in a healthy and balanced way.

KEYWORDS: Academic Stress, High School Students, Mental Health, Coping Mechanisms, Parental Pressure, Peer Comparison, Self-doubt, Exam Anxiety, Lack of Counselling Support, School Environment.

1.1 OPERATIONAL DEFINATION

Academic stress: Academic stress is defined as the transient experience of pressure, anxiety, or distress related to achieving academic goals. Academic stress refers to the experience from school-related pressures like tests, homework, and the need to meet high standards. This stress occurs when students feel they are unable to handle academic challenges effectively, which can result in feelings of anxiety, frustration, or a decrease in motivation.

Stress: A psychological and physical reaction to the demands of academic life. Stress represents the body's reaction to various demands or challenges. It can arise from multiple sources, such as academic pressures, personal issues, or societal expectations. Although moderate levels of stress can serve to motivate students, excessive stress can have detrimental effects on both their mental and physical well-being.

Depression: A mental health disorder marked by ongoing feelings of sadness, diminished interest, and exhaustion, frequently induced by high levels of stress. Depression is a mental

health disorder characterized by persistent feelings of sadness, diminished interest in activities, and a lack of energy. When students face significant academic stress without effective coping mechanisms, they may develop depression, which can hinder their ability to focus, excel academically, and maintain motivation in their educational pursuits.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Academic stress has become a significant concern among high school students. As students face increasing the pressure to achieve high grades, excel in competitive examinations, and fulfil the expectations set by educators and parents, many students experience feelings of anxiety, fatigue, and mental exhaustion. This stress not only hampers their ability to focus and perform academically but also adversely affects their emotional and physical well-being. Some students may encounter stress-related issues such as insomnia, diminished self-esteem, frustration, and even symptoms of depression. Furthermore, academic stress can result in behavioural changes, including social withdrawal, avoidance of school, or the adoption of unhealthy coping strategies like procrastination or neglecting their studies. Even though academic stress is a widespread issue, it often goes unspoken. Many schools lack effective support systems to assist students in managing stress positively. It's important to identify the true sources of this stress, which can include exam pressure, heavy homework, parental expectations, and time constraints, as well as to examine how students deal with it. Academic stress is a significant problem, it is often misunderstood or ignored. A lot of students struggle to manage the pressure and may hesitate to seek help. While some find positive ways to cope, such as organizing their time or talking to someone, others might use negative methods like avoiding their responsibilities, overanalysing situations, or isolating themselves.

This research aims to explore the impact of academic stress on high school students. It is important to understand what factors that contribute to this stress, how it affects students, and the coping strategies they use to manage it. By understanding these aspects can help educators, parents, and schools develop better methods to support students in handling stress and enhancing their overall well-being.

1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study aims to explore how academic pressure impacts the mental well-being of high school students, often leading to stress and depression. By delving into the challenges students encounter in their academic environment, the research seeks to uncover the root causes of their stress. The insights gained can play a crucial role in developing better support systems, such as

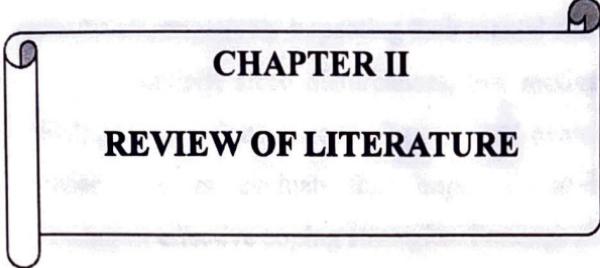
counselling services and stress management programs, to help students navigate academic pressure more effectively. Beyond just identifying the problem, this study also aims to create awareness among teachers, parents, and policymakers about the significance of mental health support in schools. It will emphasize the need for a more balanced approach to education—one that values not only academic achievements but also the overall well-being of students. Additionally, the research can contribute to existing academic discussions on students' mental health and serve as a useful reference for future studies in this field. And also the findings may inspire positive changes within the education system, such as reducing excessive academic workload, incorporating mental health education, and fostering a more supportive learning environment. Since this study focuses on students in Guwahati, it will also take into account the local cultural, educational, and socio-economic factors influencing their mental health. Gaining a deeper understanding of these aspects can help in crafting more effective strategies to support students in this region.

1.4 OBJECTIVES

- To identify the causes of academic pressure.
- To identify how academic stress has an impact on mental health.
- To explore the strategies by which students cope with their academic stress.

1.5 Research questions

1. How do high school students experience and perceive academic stress, and what are the key academic-related factors contributing to this stress and depression?
2. What are the psychological impacts of academic pressure on students, and how do they cope with stress and maintain emotional well-being?



CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

INTRODUCTION —

What does this chapter contain?

Sagar et al (2017) conducted a study on *"A study of academic stress among higher secondary school student"*. In this study the researcher examines the growing issue of academic stress among higher secondary school students, emphasizing its causes, effects, and potential solutions. The study identifies various stressors, including high parental and societal expectations, intense examination pressure, heavy academic workload, and the fear of failure. Additionally, poor time management, lack of relaxation, and peer competition further contribute to students' stress levels, negatively impacting their mental and physical well-being. Academic stress often leads to anxiety, sleep disturbances, low motivation, and decreased academic performance, making it a serious concern for students' overall development. The study aims to analyze these stressors, evaluate their impact on students' academic and emotional well-being, and suggest effective coping strategies. Findings indicate that academic stress is widespread, with many students experiencing significant psychological and physiological distress. The research emphasizes the importance of implementing stress management techniques such as proper time management, relaxation exercises, counseling, and a balanced study schedule. Additionally, emotional support from parents, teachers, and peers plays a crucial role in reducing stress. The study concludes that schools and families must create a supportive learning environment that fosters student well-being and encourages a healthier approach to academic challenges. Addressing academic stress effectively can lead to improved performance, mental health, and overall life satisfaction among students.

Pascoe et al. (2020) conducted a study on *"The impact of stress on students in secondary school and higher education"*. In this study examine how stress affects students in secondary school and higher education. The study highlights that academic pressure, personal challenges, and social expectations contribute to high stress levels among students. Long-term stress can negatively impact mental health, leading to anxiety, depression, and decreased motivation. The research also explains that stress affects students' physical health, causing sleep problems, headaches, and fatigue. High stress levels can reduce focus and memory, making learning difficult. As a result, students may struggle with academic performance and overall well-being. The study suggests ways to reduce stress, including regular exercise, mindfulness, and time management. Support from family, teachers, and friends also plays a crucial role in helping students cope with stress. Schools and universities should promote mental health awareness and provide resources like counseling services.

Meesripong et al. (2024) conduct a study on "*The Impact and Causes of Stress Among High School Students*" In this study examine the main reasons behind stress among high school students and its effects on their well-being. The study identifies academic workload, parental expectations, exam pressure, and peer competition as the primary causes of stress. Additionally, students struggle to balance school, extracurricular activities, and personal life, further increasing their stress levels. The research highlights that prolonged stress negatively impacts students' mental and physical health. Many

students experience anxiety, depression, sleep disturbances, and reduced motivation. High stress levels can also lead to difficulty concentrating, poor academic performance, and withdrawal from social interactions. The study finds that academic stress is widespread, with parental and societal expectations being major contributors. Students who lack proper stress management skills often struggle with their studies and mental health. However, those who practice time management, engage in relaxation techniques, and seek emotional support cope better with stress. Schools and parents should provide emotional support and teach students stress management techniques, such as mindfulness and proper time management, to help them handle stress effectively.

Subramani.k et al (2017) conducted a study on "*Academic Stress and Mental Health Among High School Students*" "In this study examine the relationship between academic stress and mental health among high school students. The study highlights that academic pressure, exam stress, high expectations from parents and teachers, and a heavy workload are major causes of stress. Many students struggle to balance studies with personal life, which increases their anxiety and emotional distress. The research finds that prolonged academic stress has negative effects on students' mental health. It can lead to anxiety, depression, sleep problems, and a decline in concentration and motivation. High stress levels also impact students' academic performance, causing them to feel overwhelmed and less confident in their abilities. However, students who practice effective time management, relaxation techniques, and seek support from teachers and parents are better able to cope with stress. Schools should focus on promoting mental health awareness and providing counseling services to help students manage academic pressure in a healthy w examine the relationship between academic stress and mental health among high school students. The study highlights that academic pressure, exam stress, high expectations from parents and teachers, and a heavy workload are major causes of stress. Many

students struggle to balance studies with personal life, which increases their anxiety and emotional distress. The research finds that prolonged academic stress has negative effects on students' mental health. It can lead to anxiety, depression, sleep problems, and a decline in concentration and motivation. High stress levels also impact students' academic performance, causing them to feel overwhelmed and less confident in their abilities.

Ga-as et al (2024) conduct a study on *"Academic Stress and Coping Mechanisms Among High School Students"* – A Systematic Review. In this study explores the causes of academic stress among high school students and the coping mechanisms they use to manage it. The study identifies exam pressure, high parental expectations, heavy workload, and peer competition as the main sources of stress. Many students struggle to balance their academic responsibilities with extracurricular activities and personal life, which increases their stress levels. The research highlights that excessive academic stress negatively impacts students' mental and physical health. It can lead to anxiety, depression, sleep problems, and decreased motivation. High stress levels also affect students' academic performance and social interactions, making them feel overwhelmed and emotionally exhausted.

Academic stress is a major concern for high school students, affecting their mental well-being and academic success. The study finds that students who use effective coping strategies, such as time management, relaxation techniques, and seeking emotional support, are better able to handle stress. Schools should promote stress management programs and provide counseling services to help students develop healthy coping mechanisms. Encouraging a balanced lifestyle and creating a supportive learning environment can significantly reduce academic stress.

Hachintu M. et al (2021) conducted a study on *The Effects of Stress on "Academic Performance Among High School Students in Lusaka"*. In the study examines how stress affects the academic performance of high school students in Lusaka. The study identifies academic pressure, exam stress, high parental expectations, and peer competition as major causes of stress. Additionally, students struggle with balancing schoolwork, extracurricular activities, and personal responsibilities, which further contributes to their stress levels. The research highlights that excessive stress negatively impacts students' academic performance. It leads to anxiety, difficulty concentrating, sleep problems, and a decrease in motivation. High stress levels can also result in lower grades, poor time management, and reduced participation in school activities. Students who do not manage stress effectively are more likely to feel overwhelmed and discouraged in their studies. The study finds that students who experience

high stress levels often struggle with their studies and emotional health. However, those who practice stress management techniques, such as relaxation exercises, effective time management, and seeking emotional support, perform better academically. Schools should provide guidance and counseling services to help students cope with academic stress and create a positive learning environment.

Strom et al conducted a study on "*High School Student Stress and School Improvement*" In this study explores the causes of stress among high school students and how schools can improve to reduce stress levels. The study identifies academic pressure, strict deadlines, high parental expectations, peer competition, and heavy workloads as the main sources of stress. Many students struggle to balance school responsibilities with personal life, leading to anxiety and emotional exhaustion. The research highlights that excessive stress negatively affects students' academic performance, mental health, and social interactions. Stress often results in anxiety, sleep disturbances, difficulty concentrating, and a decline in motivation. If not managed properly, it can lead to burnout and lower self-confidence. The study emphasizes the need for schools to create a supportive environment that helps students cope with stress. High school stress is a serious issue that impacts students' overall well-being. The study finds that schools play a crucial role in helping students manage academic stress. Schools should implement stress management programs, provide counseling services, and promote time management and relaxation techniques. Encouraging a balanced lifestyle and offering emotional support can improve students' mental health and academic success. By making these improvements, schools can create a healthier and more productive learning environment.

Akanpaadgi, E. et al (2023). "*The impact of stress on students*" academic conducted a study on examines how stress affects students' academic performance. The study identifies academic pressure, high expectations from parents and teachers, exam anxiety, and time constraints as major sources of stress. Additionally, students struggle to balance school responsibilities, extracurricular activities, and personal life, which further increases their stress levels. The research highlights that prolonged stress negatively affects students' cognitive functions, leading to decreased concentration, poor memory retention, and difficulty in problem-solving. High stress levels also contribute to sleep disturbances, anxiety, and reduced motivation, which can result in lower academic performance and disengagement from studies. Academic stress is a major challenge for students, impacting both their mental well-being and academic success. The study finds that students who do not effectively manage stress experience a decline in performance and overall health. However, those who adopt coping strategies such as time

management, relaxation techniques, and seeking emotional support are better able to handle academic challenges. Schools should implement stress management programs and provide psychological support to help students cope with academic pressure in a healthy way.

Mishra (2023) "*Academic stress in students*. The study Explores the causes, effects, and coping strategies related to academic stress among students. The study identifies key stressors such as exam pressure, high parental and societal expectations, heavy workload, and time constraints. Additionally, students often struggle to balance academics with extracurricular activities, leading to increased anxiety and emotional distress. The research highlights that prolonged academic stress negatively impacts students' mental and physical well-being. It can cause sleep disturbances, reduced concentration, lack of motivation, and even symptoms of anxiety and depression. High stress levels also contribute to lower academic performance and decreased self-confidence. The study emphasizes the need for better stress management techniques to help students cope with academic pressure. Academic stress is a major issue affecting students' performance and well-being. The study finds that students who practice effective time management, relaxation techniques, and seek emotional support are better equipped to handle stress. Schools and parents should work together to create a supportive learning environment and implement mental health programs to help students manage academic pressure. Encouraging a balanced lifestyle can significantly improve students' overall academic experience and mental health.

Deb et al (2015) conducted a study on "*Academic Stress, Parental Pressure, Anxiety, and Mental health Among Indian High School Students* "In the study examines the impact of academic stress and parental pressure on the mental health of Indian high school students. The study identifies key stressors, including high academic expectations, competitive exams, fear of failure, and excessive workload. Parental pressure plays a significant role in increasing students' anxiety, as many parents expect their children to achieve top academic performance, leading to stress and emotional distress.

The research highlights that prolonged exposure to academic stress and parental expectations can negatively impact students' mental health. Many students experience anxiety, sleep disturbances, low self-esteem, and depression due to constant academic pressure. High stress levels also contribute to reduced concentration and motivation, which negatively affect academic performance. The study emphasizes the need for effective coping strategies to help students manage stress and improve their well-being. Academic stress and parental pressure

significantly affect students' mental health and academic performance. The study finds that students who use stress management techniques, such as time management, relaxation exercises, and emotional support from family and teachers, are better able to cope with stress. Schools should implement counseling services and awareness programs to help students handle academic pressure in a healthy way. Creating a supportive environment can improve students' overall well-being and academic success.

Williams (2021) conducted a study on "*Addressing Stress In High School Students During the Covid -19 Pandemic*" In this study explores the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on high school students' stress levels and mental health. The study identifies key stressors, including disruptions in routine learning, social isolation, increased academic pressure due to online education, and uncertainty about the future. Many students struggled with adapting to remote learning, managing their workload, and maintaining motivation, leading to heightened stress and anxiety. The research highlights that prolonged stress during the pandemic negatively affected students' mental health, contributing to sleep disturbances, lack of concentration, and emotional exhaustion. Students also reported increased anxiety due to health concerns, financial difficulties at home, and reduced social interactions. The study emphasizes the importance of providing mental health support and coping mechanisms for students facing pandemic-related academic challenges.

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted students' academic experiences and mental well-being. The study finds that students who had access to emotional support, structured routines, and stress management strategies were better able to cope with pandemic-related stress. Schools should implement mental health programs, encourage communication between students and educators, and provide counseling services to help students navigate academic challenges in times of crisis.

Arcilla (2019) conducted a study on "*The Effects of Stress on the Academic Performance of Grade 10 Students at Bagong Silang*" In this study examines how stress affects the academic performance of Grade 10 students in Bagong Silang. The study identifies common stressors, including academic workload, pressure from teachers and parents, and the struggle to balance school with personal life. Many students experience stress due to high expectations, challenging subjects, and upcoming examinations. The research highlights that excessive stress negatively impacts students' concentration, memory retention, and motivation. Many students who experience high stress levels suffer from sleep disturbances, anxiety, and emotional

exhaustion, which directly affect their academic performance. The study emphasizes that without proper stress management techniques, students may face long-term mental health issues and academic decline. Academic stress significantly affects students' performance and well-being. The study finds that students who adopt coping strategies such as time management, relaxation techniques, and seeking emotional support perform better academically. Schools should provide guidance programs and stress management workshops to help students handle academic pressure effectively. A supportive learning environment, along with parental and teacher encouragement, can help students achieve academic success while maintaining good mental health.

Karki et. al (2022) conducted a study on *"Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Among High School Students – A Cross-Sectional Study in an Urban Municipality of Kathmandu, Nepal"* In this study investigates the prevalence of depression, anxiety, and stress among high school students in an urban area of Kathmandu, Nepal. The study identifies academic pressure, parental expectations, financial concerns, and peer relationships as major contributors to students' mental health struggles. Many students reported experiencing stress due to high competition, fear of failure, and the pressure to meet academic expectations. The research highlights that prolonged exposure to academic stress can lead to serious mental health concerns, including anxiety and depression. Many students with high stress levels experience difficulty concentrating, sleep disturbances, and reduced motivation. The study emphasizes the importance of early intervention, mental health awareness, and school-based support systems to help students cope with stress effectively. The study finds that students who receive emotional support from parents, teachers, and peers, along with practicing relaxation techniques and time management strategies, can better manage stress. Schools should implement mental health programs, provide counseling services, and create a supportive learning environment to help students cope with academic challenges.

Udayan (2023) conducted a study on *"Impact of Academic Stress on the Physical and Mental Health of High School Students"* In this study examines how academic stress affects the physical and mental health of high school students. The study identifies major stressors, including heavy academic workload, pressure from parents and teachers, competitive exams, and fear of failure. Many students struggle to balance their studies with personal life, leading to increased stress level.

The research highlights that prolonged academic stress has negative effects on students' well-being. Physically, students may experience headaches, fatigue, sleep disturbances, and weakened immunity. Mentally, stress contributes to anxiety, depression, and decreased motivation, making it difficult for students to focus on their studies. High stress levels can also lead to emotional exhaustion and low self-esteem, further impacting academic performance. The study finds that students who practice time management, relaxation techniques, and seek emotional support from family and teachers are better able to cope with stress. Schools should implement mental health awareness programs, provide counseling services, and create a supportive learning environment to help students manage academic pressure effectively.

Hussain (2008) conducted a study on *"Academic Stress and Adjustment Among High School Student"* In this study explores the relationship between academic stress and students' ability to adjust in a high school setting. The study highlights key stressors such as high academic expectations, examination pressure, competition, and parental influence. Many students struggle to manage their academic workload while also dealing with social and personal challenges. The research finds that students experiencing high levels of academic stress often face difficulties in emotional and social adjustment. Stress can lead to anxiety, irritability, sleep disturbances, and decreased motivation. Students who lack coping strategies may struggle with concentration and decision-making, negatively impacting their academic performance. The study also emphasizes that a supportive environment, including positive teacher-student relationships and parental encouragement, can help students adjust better to academic pressures. Academic stress plays a crucial role in students' mental well-being and their ability to adjust to school life. The study suggests that students who develop stress management techniques, such as effective time management, relaxation exercises, and emotional support from family and teachers, can better handle academic pressure. Schools should provide counseling services and create a supportive academic environment to help students cope with stress effectively.

Handayani et al 2024 conducted a study on *"Coping Strategies in Overcoming Academic Stress Among High School Students"* This study explores how high school students cope with academic stress. The study identifies common stressors such as academic workload, exam pressure, parental expectations, and competition. Many students struggle with balancing school responsibilities and personal life, leading to increased stress levels.

The research highlights various coping strategies used by students. These include time management, relaxation techniques, seeking social support, and engaging in extracurricular activities. Students who practice mindfulness, maintain a healthy lifestyle, and develop problem-solving skills are better able to manage academic stress. The study also emphasizes the importance of teacher and parental support in helping students navigate academic challenges. Effective coping strategies play a vital role in reducing academic stress and improving students' well-being. The study finds that students who actively use stress management techniques, such as planning their study schedules, practicing self-care, and seeking guidance, perform better academically and experience lower stress levels. Schools should integrate mental health programs and provide counseling services to support students in handling academic pressure.

J. M. et al. (2018) conducted a study on *"Stress in High School Students: A Descriptive Study"*. This study explores the study highlights the increasing stress levels due to academic pressure, social expectations, and personal challenges. Stress at this stage can lead to severe mental and physical health problems, impacting students' academic performance and overall well-being. The study identifies several major causes of stress among students, including examination pressure, excessive workload, strict deadlines, and parental expectations. Additionally, factors such as social competition, peer influence, and time management difficulties contribute to increased stress levels. The research findings indicate that a high percentage of students experience anxiety, lack of motivation, sleep disturbances, and emotional exhaustion due to academic stress. Many students struggle to balance their studies with extracurricular activities, leading to burnout and decreased performance in school. The article emphasizes the need for schools to implement stress management programs, including counseling services, relaxation techniques, and flexible study schedules. Teachers and parents should provide emotional support and encourage students to adopt effective coping strategies, such as time management and self-care practices. Addressing academic stress is crucial in ensuring students' mental health and academic success.

Lin et al. (2013) conducted a study on *"Psychological Distress, Sources of Stress, and Coping Strategies in High School Students"*. In the study discusses the stress faced by high school students and how it affects their mental health. The study highlights that teenagers experience significant pressure from academics, relationships, and personal challenges. If not managed well, this stress can lead to serious mental health issues later in life. The study aimed to identify the main stressors among high school students and how they cope with them. It found that

academic stress was the most common source of distress. Many students used negative coping strategies, such as avoiding problems or engaging in unhealthy behaviors, rather than seeking support or using relaxation techniques. The research revealed that about 47.6% of students suffered from psychological distress, especially around exam periods. Students who lacked positive coping strategies were more likely to experience anxiety and emotional exhaustion. The study emphasized that schools and parents need to be more attentive to students' mental health. The study concludes that stress among high school students is a serious issue that requires immediate attention. Schools should provide counseling, stress management training, and encourage positive coping methods. Parents and teachers should also offer emotional support to help students handle academic pressure effectively.

Pillai et al. (2023) conducted a study on *"Academic Stress and Coping in High School Adolescents"*. The study examines the prevalence of academic stress among high school students in Kerala, India, along with its contributing factors and coping mechanisms. Academic stress is recognized as a leading cause of depression among adolescents, and this research aims to help educational institutions better understand the challenges students face. A cross-sectional study was conducted in 2020 with 371 randomly selected students from both private and government schools. The study used three standardized questionnaires: Educational Stress Scale for Adolescents (ESSA), Academic Stress Scale (ASC), and Simplified Coping Styles Questionnaire (SCSQ).

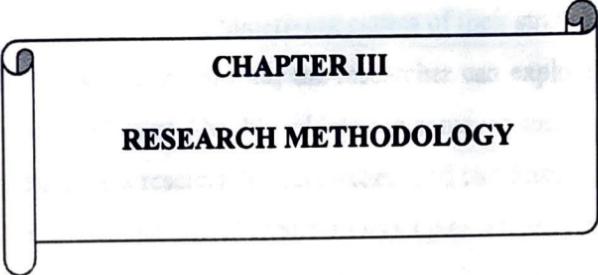
The study reveals that most high school students experience minimal to moderate stress, with a few facing high levels of stress. Factors such as gender, parental education, and academic performance significantly influence stress levels. Additionally, students rely on coping strategies, with active methods being more common. This research suggests that schools and parents should focus on providing emotional and academic support to students, particularly those with lower academic performance and higher parental expectations. Encouraging active coping mechanisms and reducing unnecessary academic pressure could help mitigate stress among adolescents.

Jagiello et al. (2024) conducted a *"systematic literature review on academic stress interventions in high schools"*. In the study highlighting the significance of addressing school-related distress among students. The study examined various school-based programs designed to reduce or prevent academic stress, analyzing 31 studies from 13 different countries. The researchers categorized these interventions based on type, format, and facilitator, finding that

cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT)-based programs demonstrated the strongest evidence of effectiveness. Both universal interventions, aimed at all students, and targeted interventions, designed for at-risk individuals, were found to be beneficial. However, a key finding was that programs delivered by psychologists were generally more effective than those facilitated by teachers. The study also noted that many of the reviewed programs had methodological limitations, such as small sample sizes, inactive control groups, and a lack of long-term follow-up assessments. Despite these challenges, the review underscored the necessity of implementing structured and evidence-based interventions in high schools to mitigate academic stress. The findings suggest that schools should integrate psychological support systems, refine teacher-led interventions, and conduct further research to ensure effective and sustainable stress management programs for students.

D. V. et al (2020) conducted a study on *"Academic stress and coping strategies of high school students with single-parents in Antique"*. This study examines the level of academic stress and coping strategies among high school students raised by single parents in a Catholic school in Antique, Philippines. Recognizing the growing stress among students, the researchers aimed to assess how these individuals manage academic challenges and to explore the relationship between their demographics and levels of academic stress and coping strategies. Using a descriptive-correlational research design, the study gathered data from 67 students selected through simple random sampling. Standardized instruments developed by Rao (2012) and Carver (1989) were employed to measure academic stress and coping strategies, with statistical analysis conducted using mean, standard deviation, and Pearson product-moment correlation. The findings indicated that the overall academic stress level among high school students with single parents was low. However, when categorized by sex and family monthly income, moderate levels of academic stress were observed. Fear of failure emerged as the most significant source of stress among students. In terms of coping, students generally demonstrated a strong ability to manage stress, with those from higher-income families exhibiting greater coping skills than their lower-income counterparts. Emotion-focused coping was the predominant strategy used, whereas avoidance-focused coping was the least employed. The study further revealed no significant relationship between academic stress and factors such as academic level and the educational attainment of single parents. However, a significant correlation was found between academic stress and both sex and family income. Similarly, no significant relationship was observed between demographic variables and the extent of coping strategies, except for family income, which influenced students' coping levels.

Hearon et al (2015) conducted a study on *"Stress and coping in high school students in accelerated academic curricula: Developmental trends and relationships with student success"* study explores the stress levels and coping mechanisms of high school students enrolled in accelerated academic programs, such as Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB). Recognizing that students in these rigorous curricula face heightened academic demands, the research aims to identify developmental trends in stress and coping strategies while examining their impact on academic success. The study investigates how students manage academic pressures and whether their coping methods evolve as they progress through high school. The research highlights that students in advanced programs experience significant academic stress due to increased workload, high expectations, and the pressure to excel. However, coping strategies vary, with some students employing adaptive methods such as problem-focused coping, while others rely on maladaptive strategies like avoidance. The study suggests that students who effectively use problem-focused coping tend to perform better academically and maintain greater psychological well-being. Additionally, findings indicate that stress levels fluctuate across grade levels, with upperclassmen often reporting higher stress due to impending college admissions and future uncertainties.



CHAPTER III
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

3.1 Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework serves as a foundational guide that aids researchers in comprehending and explain their study topics. It includes essential theories that support the research and support the interconnections among various factors. In this study the theoretical framework is involved in examining the influence of academic stress on high school students and their coping mechanisms in daily life. This framework enables the researcher to analyze students' experiences, emotions, and behaviors in the face of academic pressure, while also offering a systematic approach to identifying the underlying causes of their stress and the strategies they students to cope. By using this framework, the researcher can explore into the relationship between academic stress and mental health, addressing concerns such as reduced motivation, anxiety, and depression. In this research the researcher used two important theories to support the framework: The Transactional Model of Stress and Coping and the Self-Regulation Theory. These theories help for data collection and analysis by clarifying how students perceive and manage stress. This framework increased the understanding of the effects of academic pressure on students and suggest methods for promoting healthy and balanced stress management.

Transactional Model of stress and Coping (Lazarus and Folkman,1984).

This study follows Lazarus and Folkman's Stress and Coping Theory, which explains how people assess and manage stress. Stress arises when challenges feel overwhelming. Effective coping reduces stress, while poor coping increases it. This theory helps understand how students deal academic pressure and how their coping strategies impact stress levels. The model highlights two main types of coping.

1.problem-focused coping: Approaches focused on tackling the underlying factors of stress include effective time management, obtaining academic assistance, and establishing clear study objectives.

2.Emotion focused coping: Approaches that manage emotional reactions to stress include methods such as relaxation practices, obtaining social support, and participating in leisure activities.

Lazarus and Folkman's Transactional Model of Stress and Coping posits that stress arises not only from challenging circumstances but also from individuals' perceptions and reactions to those situations. When students encounter academic pressures, including exams, assignments,

or elevated expectations, they undergo two essential processes such as primary appraisal and secondary appraisal.

- **Primary Appraisal:** The student initially assesses whether the academic task is a threat, a challenge, or insignificant. If they perceive exams or assignments as overly difficult or beyond their capabilities, they are likely to experience stress. Conversely, if they view the situation as a manageable challenge, they may feel motivated rather than anxious
- **Secondary Appraisal :** When a student experiences stress, they consider their ability to handle the situation. If they feel equipped to cope—through studying, seeking assistance, or effectively managing their time—they are likely to experience a reduction in stress. Conversely, if they perceive themselves as helpless or unprepared, their stress levels may rise.

Lazarus and Folkman's theory explain that the stress from academic demands impacts students not only through the amount of work they have but also through their perceptions and reactions to it. By cultivating effective coping strategies like managing time wisely, asking for assistance, and maintaining a positive attitude, students can lessen their stress and better manage pressure.

Self-Regulation Theory (Baumeister and Vohs,2007) and Academic Pressure

Self-Regulation Theory (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007) describes how people manage their thoughts, feelings, and actions to reach their goals, particularly when under stress. This theory is essential for maintaining focus, motivation, and discipline while facing challenges. In the realm of academic stress, self-regulation is vital for how students handle pressure. Those who excel in self-regulation can effectively plan their study time, minimize distractions, and control their emotions. In the context of school, this theory shows how students deal with academic challenges and the impact it has on their stress levels.

For Example-a student preparing for several exams might develop a study timetable, practice relaxation methods to remain calm, and motivate themselves to keep going. Conversely, students lacking self-regulation may procrastinate, feel overwhelmed, and find it hard to concentrate, which can heighten their stress. If students do not cultivate self-regulation techniques like setting goals, managing their time, and controlling their emotions, academic pressure can lead to significant anxiety. Schools and educators can support students by promoting these skills, which can help lower stress and enhance academic success.

- **Goal-Setting and Academic Stress:**

Students who have good self-control tend to establish achievable academic goals and organize their study time well. On the other hand, students lacking self-regulation might create goals that are too ambitious, which can result in disappointment and heightened stress when they find it hard to achieve those goals.

- **Managing Time and Avoiding Procrastination:**

Effective self-control allows students to prioritize their tasks, divide assignments into manageable parts, and meet deadlines consistently. On the other hand, a lack of self-control results in procrastination, cramming at the last minute, and added academic stress, which can increase feelings of anxiety and pressure.

Managing Emotions and Dealing with Failure Students who have strong self-control are able to handle feelings such as fear of failing and anxiety about tests by employing helpful coping techniques, like deep breathing and encouraging self-talk. On the other hand, students with weak self-regulation might struggle with negative feelings such as frustration, helplessness, or self-doubt, which can increase their academic stress.

- **Motivation and Academic Burnout:**

Students who manage their own learning often stay motivated by focusing on personal goals, like improving themselves. On the other hand, students who struggle with self-regulation might find it hard to stay motivated. They can feel stressed and burnt out from the constant demands of schoolwork.

- **Resilience and Adaptability:**

Self-regulation enables students to tackle academic difficulties by asking for assistance, modifying their study techniques, and remaining determined. In the absence of self-regulation, students might shy away from challenges, adopt a fixed mindset, or lose interest in learning, which can result in increased stress.

3.2 Research Design

This study adopts a descriptive research design to explore the impact of academic pressure on stress and depression among high school students. A descriptive approach is suitable as it allows for an in-depth understanding of students' lived experiences, emotions, and coping

strategies. Through qualitative methods such as interviews, observation, the study aims to capture the subjective perspectives of students dealing with academic stress.

3.3 Universe of the study: The study will focus on high school students from selected in Jonakpur, Guwahati Area. Data will be collected primary data to get a better understanding of how academic pressure affects students stress and depression.

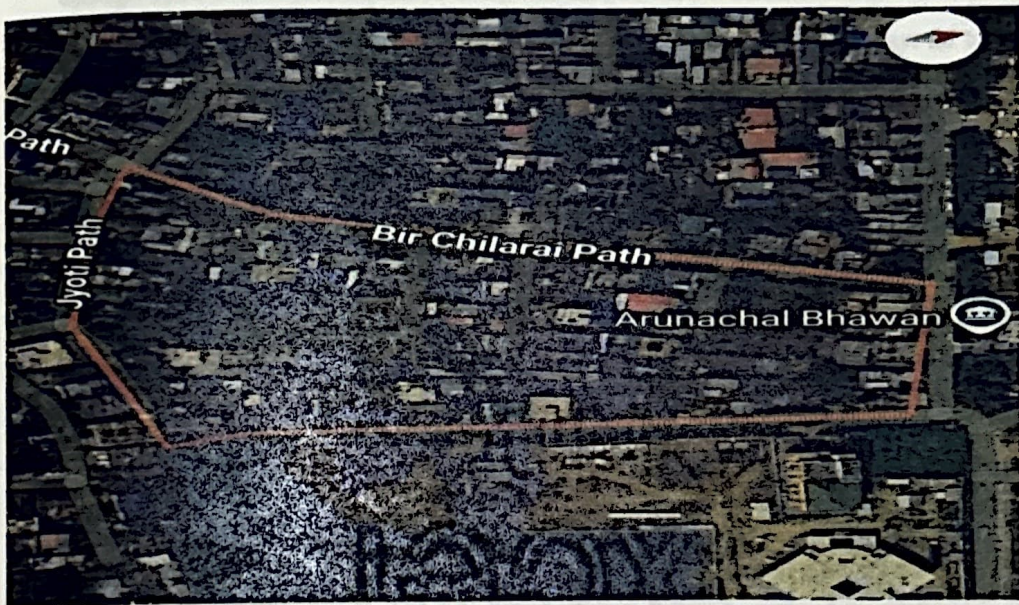


Photo: Guwahati, Joonakpur Assam

Photo Source: Goggle Map

https://maps.app.goo.gl/oGyRhNwtfTkqQgyH7?g_st=aw

3.4 Sampling Technique:

Non-probability purposive sampling: This approach involves selecting participants based on specific criteria, such as students who have experienced academic stress or depression, ensuring that the sample directly relates to the research focus. By choosing participants who meet these inclusive criteria, detailed insights into their experiences can be gathered, which is particularly useful for qualitative research aiming to explore complex issues thoroughly.

3.5 Sample Size:

The sample for this study is included of 10th high school students. The researcher were selected using a purposive sampling method to ensure they could share important insights about academic stress.

The study aimed to include approximately 15 students from different schools. Data was gathered through open-ended questionnaires and personal interviews. The small number of participants allowed for a deeper understanding of their experiences, thoughts, and ways of coping with academic pressure. The researcher analysed their responses qualitatively to explore the impact of academic stress on their mental health and their strategies for handling it.

3.6 Methods of data collection: Interviews schedule and observation was used as a tool of data collection. In-depth interviews was taken from high school students. The researcher carefully observed the students while collecting data through interviews. These observation helped the researcher understand the students feelings and stress level better.

3.7 Source of data collection:

Primary data: The primary data for this research was collected directly from students studying in Class 10. A total of fifteen students were selected, coming from different backgrounds to get a wide range of perspectives. The data was collected through unstructured interviews using an interview schedule that included 30 open-ended questions.

Secondary Data: Secondary data was gathered from various published sources such as books, academic journals, articles.

3.8 Tools of Data Analysis: The data collected through interviews was analyzed using qualitative data analysis methods. The researcher manually went through each response carefully to understand what the students were experiencing. After reading the interviews multiple times, important points were highlighted and coded to identify repeated ideas and meaningful patterns.

From these codes, the researcher created themes and sub-themes that were closely related to the research objectives. This process is known as thematic analysis. It helped to organize the data clearly and understand the common experiences and emotional responses of the students regarding academic stress.

In this study the researcher used manual methods to analyzed the data collected from interviews.

Data Collection: Tool and techniques are used -

Observation – One-on-one discussions with students to understand their experiences with academic pressure and its effects on their mental health.

Unstructured interview schedule: A set of descriptive questions allowing students to share their thoughts and feelings in detail.

3.9 Ethical consideration and consent

3.9.1 Clear Communication:

The purpose of the research was explained clearly in simple words so that participants understood why they were being interviewed

3.9.2 Voluntary Participation:

All participants joined the research by their own choice. No one was forced or pressured to take part.

3.9.3 Informed Consent:

Verbal and written consent was taken from each participant. For minors, consent was also taken from parents or guardians.

3.9.4 Confidentiality Maintained:

The real names of the students were not used. Pseudonyms were given to protect their identities.

3.9.5 Emotional Well-being

Care was taken not to hurt anyone emotionally during the interviews. If a question made a student feel upset, they were allowed to skip it. The questions were asked gently and with understanding.

3.9.6 Honest Reporting

All the information collected was written exactly as it was shared by the students. Nothing was changed or made up. The findings were reported truthfully to reflect the real experiences of the participants.

3.10 LIMITATION

3.10.1 No Interviews with School Authorities

The researcher did not include principals, teachers, or counselors in the interview process, so their opinions and experiences are missing from the study.

3.10.2 Only Student Perspectives Collected

Data was gathered only from Class 10 students in Jonakpur Guwahati, which means the study reflects only the student side of academic stress.

3.10.3 Lack of Institutional Insight

Without school staff input, the research does not capture how schools view or manage academic stress, policies, or student support systems.

3.11 Inclusion Criteria:

1. The study included students currently studying in Class 10.
2. Only students residing in Guwahati were selected.
3. Both boys and girls from government and private schools students were included.
4. Participants had to willingly give consent to be interviewed.
5. Students who could communicate in Assamese, Hindi, or English were chosen.
6. The study included only those who could give 30 minutes for the interview.

Exclusion Criteria:

1. Students from classes other than Class 10 were not included.
2. Students who live outside Guwahati were excluded.
3. Students who refused to give consent were not considered.
4. Those diagnosed with serious mental health issues were excluded.
5. Students who missed or couldn't complete the interview were also left out.

CHAPTER IV
DATA ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION

INTRODUCTION

Data analysis is a process of examining data to find useful information. In this section the researcher has carefully analysed and interpreted the data was collected.

Respondents-1

I belong to a family where everybody is expecting me to achieve high marks, particularly my parents. They're always saying that good marks will ensure my future, and I feel this pressure on a daily basis. Sometimes, they compare my performance with that of my cousins and classmates, and they make me feel that I am never good enough. There are instances when the pressure becomes so extreme that I consider quitting. In those moments, my brain is filled with thoughts such as, "What happens if I fail?" or "I'm not intelligent enough." It is challenging to balance studies alongside my passion for playing football, and very many times I fail to provide adequate time to both. Occasionally, I find myself distracted by my phone or video games whenever I attempt to study, which isn't helpful. I believe that schools can minimize stress levels with fewer exams and more breaks for sports and creativity. I attempt to organize my study schedule so that I get breaks and do not get too stressed, but it does not always work. Teachers also contribute to the pressure by enforcing strict rules and demanding that we do an abundance of homework. This pressure makes me very moody, I become annoyed and depressed without realizing it. I do think that too much pressure from studying can lead to depression; I've had some friends experience that. It also disrupts my sleep because I'm always worrying about exams during the night. I've certainly felt depressed and sad as a result of my studies sometimes. Even after sleeping, I still feel tired mentally, as if my mind does not rest. At times, I lose all motivation and wonder if I am doing all this for nothing. During exam times, I feel nervous and even fearful. There have been times when I consider giving up my objectives because the stress becomes intolerable. Mentally, the stress weighs me down and makes me feel despondent. Sadly, I do not feel at ease talking about my stress to school officials since there is no counsellor in my school. I have inculcated some breathing techniques that I learned from the web in order to relax. These ease me slightly, but sometimes they are insufficient. I take short recess while studying, such as listening to music or stretching. I organize my daily workload through to-do lists, but sometimes unplanned tasks interfere with my schedule. I struggle to balance studying and playing football, but I do my best. Since we don't have a

counselor, I don't receive professional guidance. The most significant thing I've understood about managing stress is not to keep everything inside and attempting little relaxation techniques. Listening to music relaxes me when exams are stressful. Normally speak with my older brother or friends when I am stressed. I try to organize myself by making notes in advance, so I do not feel pressure at the last minute.

Respondents 2

My parents always want me to achieve high grades since they think that it is the door to having a bright future. I do get a lot of pressure from them and even relatives who continuously ask about my performance. Sometimes they compare me to my peers who perform better, and it makes me feel insignificant. There were occasions when I just felt like giving up on studies completely due to so much pressure. When I feel stressed, my thoughts go wild with such questions as "What if I fail my exams?" or "I'm not as good as others" Balancing studies with drawing is extremely difficult. I wish to spend more time on painting but feel guilty because my studies get affected. I get easily distracted, particularly by my phone, and that makes focusing even more difficult. I wish that exams were fewer in number at my school or we were given more time for leisure activities; that would help decrease stress to a great extent. I attempt to create a study schedule in which I work in short intervals and have breaks, but it is hard to maintain. Teachers further contribute to the pressure by enforcing tough rules and tons of homework, and at times, it feels like too much. The stress impacts my mood a great deal I get worried and occasionally even sob when I'm overwhelmed. I do believe academic pressure can cause depression because I've seen some friends become extremely withdrawn. The stress makes it difficult for me to sleep well. I tend to lie awake worrying about exams and assignments. At times, I get extremely sad due to school, and even after getting a good night's sleep, I remain tired and drained. Stress also makes me lose my drive, and I begin doubting whether I can perform well. As exams get nearer, I get anxious and terrified, and I've even considered abandoning my aspirations since it all seems too overwhelming. Emotionally, the stress gets me down, and I feel lonely. I don't feel comfortable discussing this with school personnel because there isn't a counselor present, and teachers don't actually inquire about our feelings. I have attempted breathing techniques and meditation that I found on the internet, which ease me up a bit. I get a break during study sessions by drawing or listening to music, which relaxes me. In order to deal with my workload, I attempt to divide my studies into little works daily. Combining schoolwork and my hobby of arts is difficult, but I attempt to allocate time to both. As there is no counselor, I depend on communicating with my close friends and

sometimes my mom when I am stressed. The greatest thing I have learned is to attempt to remain calm and not have stress pent up within. I listen to relaxing music to help me remain calm on stressful exam days. When I get stressed, I speak with my closest friend or my mom, which helps me feel better. I also attempt to remain organized by preparing for exams in advance so that I don't feel hurried at the last minute.

Respondents 3

My name is Bidyut I belong to a family that considers studies seriously. My parents expect me to score well, particularly as I'm in Class 10 now. They frequently remind me of the significance of board exams. I do feel stressed both from them as well as relatives and neighbors who question me regarding my marks. It gives me an idea that everyone is watching over me. My parents sometimes compare my grades with those of my topper cousin. It does not feel nice it makes me doubt myself. I even think of quitting sometimes, like when I failed in a class test after studying very hard for it. Under such tense conditions, I feel stressed and like crying. My mind gets filled up with self-doubt and fear of disappointing my family. Balancing homework and household chores is extremely difficult. I also enjoy sketching, yet I barely have time for it anymore. Cell phones are distracting too. I attempt to steer clear of social media while testing, yet it is tempting. I believe that schools need to put more emphasis on mental health. We don't have a school counsellor at our school, and no one really checks on us emotionally. I attempt to plan my study, but I feel stressed and end up not relieved to it. My teachers intend to help, but I get more anxious due to their strictness and pressure to do well. My mood keeps on changing I feel irritable or go blank while studying. I do think academic pressure can lead to depression. I've felt extremely low before my term exams, even cried secretly. Stress impacts my sleep negatively. Sometimes I stay up until midnight studying, then am unable to sleep well. I wake up exhausted and still feel mentally exhausted. My head still feels heavy even after sleeping. I've lost interest in studying occasionally and felt totally demotivated. When exams approach, I am extremely nervous and frightened. Once I even considered not attending the exam as I felt like a failure. Stress not only impacts my mind it makes me feel lonely. I don't discuss it with teachers as they only care about marks. I wish we had someone to speak with. I try to practice deep breathing when I study, and it helps me a bit. When I'm on breaks, I draw in my notebook or sit quietly in my room. It relaxes me. I attempt to handle my workload by studying early in the morning, but it's hard when there is a lot of homework. I barely have time to draw anymore. I used to look up stress management on the internet, and it made me hopeful. What I've discovered is that it is acceptable to feel stressed out, but not to keep it inside. When

I get stressed during exam periods, I listen to music or call my best friend. She always makes me feel better. Talking to someone works, even though they can't fix the problem. I also try to stay prepared and not cram at the last minute it adds stress. Stress is difficult, but I'm attempting to develop ways of dealing with it.

Respondents 4

My name is Aarav, and I'm studying in Class 10 in a government school in Guwahati. My parents always wanted me to perform well. They always want me to get good marks, mainly because they think it's the only way for me to improve my future. Occasionally, I feel like I'm carrying their dreams on my shoulders. It's not only my parents teachers, relatives, even the neighbours expect me to perform well. I still recall how down I was when my dad put my grades alongside those of my cousin, who always comes first in his class. I had flunked Maths last term, and I was ready to give up.

At that time, my head was filled with worries such as, "Am I not good enough?" and "Will I forever remain a failure?"

It is difficult to balance everything. I adore painting, but now I hardly ever get time for it. Even when I stay to study, my phone tempts me with games and messages. I believe schools are too hard on marks. They need to concentrate on practical learning and imagination. Now I try to stick to a schedule, studying for an hour and then taking 15 minutes off. It helps somewhat with stress. But at other times, the pressure from school rules, incessant testing, and controlling teachers makes it worse. My demeanor really varies when I am stressed about studies. I become irritable and withdrawn. Yes, I do think that academic stress can cause depression when you tend to doubt yourself all the time. It also impacts my sleep. I sometimes late night try to finish my work, and then I am not able to focus in class the next day. I have frequently felt sad, hopeless, and frustrated due to studies. Even after sleeping, I feel mentally exhausted. It is as if my brain never stops thinking about studies and deadlines. I feel unmotivated and whether I will be able to achieve anything or not. I get nervous when exams approach. I perspire, my heart beats faster, and I begin to think of the worst. Once, I even contemplated dropping out and pursuing something in art just to get out of this hassle. This stress gets to both my mind and feelings. I sometimes cry in secret. I do not like speaking with teachers or school staff. They always tell me to "try harder," and it does nothing. I have recently been doing deep breathing exercises before studying. It relaxes me. These little things do work, but they don't remove the pressure entirely. Between studying, I draw or paint for a short time. It relaxes me

and clears my mind. I get my daily work done by dividing it into segments and treating myself afterwards. It is difficult to balance painting and studies, but I do my best. I wish there were more people to support me. We don't have a school counsellor, so I haven't gotten any assistance from that front. One thing I've come to realize is that it's acceptable to take things slowly not everybody thinks the same way. Music relaxes me too. I listen to mellow tunes when I'm anxious. I confide in my older sister when I'm down. She doesn't judge. And I do attempt to organize myself now I have a planner and put sticky notes up to prevent eleventh-hour scramble. Anxiety due to studies is true, and I'm learning still how to cope with it. I hope parents and schools appreciate that students are more than grades.

Respondents 5

My name is Diya, and I am in Class 10 at a government school in a village near Guwahati. My parents always want me to have good marks. They tell me education is the only way for a girl like me to become somebody. I know they are concerned, but the stress they give me sometimes makes me feel strangled.

Whenever my report card comes home, my parents ask, "What did others score?"

Then they compare me with my cousin who studies in town. I've never been a topper. I'm just average, and honestly, I'm okay with that. But my parents aren't. Numerous times, I thought of quitting studying. I have a passion for something else I dream of becoming a model. However, my parents don't even think of it as a career. I'm caught between my desires and their expectations. It is difficult to balance studies and my aspirations. At times, I steal glances at fashion videos or rehearse walking when there is no one. But when I am sitting to study, my thoughts wander. At times my phone also distracts me although I don't get much time for it. If schools had sessions that encouraged creativity or counselling for students under pressure, it would help girls like me so much. I try to follow a study plan, but I often change it depending on how stressed I feel. The school rules, such as sudden tests and severe punishment, frustrate me. Under stress, I get annoyed even with trivial matters. I feel that if this stress persists, students like me may easily get depressed. Stress also interferes with my sleep. I lie awake worrying about my future and how I will persuade my parents someday. There have been nights that I cried myself asleep because I felt so powerless. Even after getting a full night's sleep, I wake up exhausted. I want to give up when teachers yell at me or I receive poor grades. As soon as exam dates are announced, I begin to panic. My heart beats rapidly and I lose interest in all else. Yes, I've even considered quitting modelling too just to make my parents happy. It's

hard, though, to let go of something that I love. This stress has overthought me, made me feel insecure, and even made me question myself. I do not like to discuss this with my teachers. They just want grades. I do not know any breathing techniques, but I sometimes sit by myself and take deep breaths and it makes me a bit better when I feel overwhelmed. On breaks, I draw out outfits or designs on my notebook. That's how I get away from it all. I juggle studies with doing the easy subjects first, and having my friend assist me in the difficult ones. There isn't really any extracurricular activity support in our school. We could really use fashion clubs or something artsy. We don't even have a school counsellor. If we did, perhaps I wouldn't be so isolated. I have discovered that suppressing stress only worsens the situation. Spilling it out to someone even a friend is what works. Music too de-stresses me. I plug in my earphones and go into my own world for some time. I usually chat a lot with my closest friend. She won't judge me and tells me to be strong. Nowadays, I keep a small diary where I jot down what I have to do. That helps me from panicking at the last minute. I don't know where I'll be headed but I just wish someday, my aspirations and my education can coexist, not against each other.

Respondents 6

My name is Mridupaban Hazarika, I'm a Class 10 student at a private school in Guwahati. Taekwondo has been my life from a very young age. I've competed at the national level for Assam and even brought back a gold medal from an international tournament last year. But while I was bagging medals, there was the constant pressure of studies looming over me. My parents take pride in my sporting accomplishments but never fail to remind me that studies are a priority. They want me to perform well in both. That puts pressure on me because I really don't like studies. I live for sports and not science equations or maths. At times, I feel as if I'm living two different lives one on the court where I am strong and carefree, and one in school where I am suffocated and not myself. I've overheard my relatives mutter, "Sports is okay, but what if he doesn't find a job later?" My parents even made a comparison between my marks and my cousins who were toppers. I don't let it bother me, but it does. There are times that I have considered giving up on school altogether and only concentrate on sports. But a part of me realizes that I need a general education, even if it's just to keep things open. I get anxious during examination periods or when the results approach because I do not wish to disappoint my parents or receive another scolding.

When I am stressed, I become restless in my mind. I begin overthinking "What if I fail? "What if I get disqualified from sports for poor attendance?", and so forth.

Both academics and sports are exhausting to handle at the same time. I practice for hours daily, and once I sit down to study, my body gets too fatigued. Distractions such as my phone or watching videos of sports consume my study time. But they're also where I feel most comfortable. Schools would be more accommodating to students like me, perhaps fewer theory classes and more skill or support classes. A sports-inclined syllabus would cut so much stress. I attempt to schedule my study time late at night after practice, but it's never the same. When teachers set rigid deadlines or assign a stack of homework, it feels as if they have no idea what it is like to navigate two intense realms. Academic pressure makes me irritable. I get angry with my younger brother at times or yell at my mom. There have been days when I couldn't sleep properly, particularly prior to exams. Stress is normal, my coach says. However, I believe that students must not be asked to be scholars and athletes simultaneously. Yes, I've experienced low and drained mentally. Some nights, I wake up feeling exhausted. Not physically, but mentally as if I've battled an intangible fight. I've felt deflated when all the effort I put into Taekwondo gets ignored simply because I failed a subject. Towards exam time, I have pressure building up in me like a knot in my chest. Once or twice, I even wondered if it was all worth going on with sports when I looked at friends progressing in academics. But then I recall the feeling of winning a medal that moment when your flag is hoisted and it all becomes worth it again. Emotionally, I have highs and lows. At times, I feel like a champion; at others, like a failure. I have not communicated with any school personnel about my stress. We don't have an adequate counsellor. Even if we did, I don't know that I'd be comfortable opening up. I do deep breathing occasionally before a match I do the same for stressful study nights. It does help a little bit. Breaks are crucial for me. I tend to watch motivational sports videos or stretch between studies. To balance my work, I study in short intervals. My mom assists me with revising fundamentals, particularly in topics such as history or Assamese. It is never easy to balance sports and studies, but I attempt to prioritize week after week. If it is a tournament day, I prioritize more training. If it is exam time, I reduce practice hours. We don't get a lot of school counselling. I wish somebody would sit down and say, "How can we assist you with both of those paths?" That hasn't yet occurred. The greatest thing I've learned is that stress doesn't necessarily translate to productivity. It's alright to ask for assistance or just discuss the difficulties. When I get stressed, I just listen to soothing music or watch some of my previous matches where I did great it revives my morale. I also speak with my coach whenever I get mentally drained. He's the only one who really gets it. Occasionally, my dad also gets involved he encourages me more than he would ever want to acknowledge. Currently, I'm as organized as possible. I have a checklist for training and another one for school. It prevents the last-minute

anxiety that I previously experienced. Ultimately, I think success isn't solely in grades. It's in perseverance even when your journey is different. And mine just so happens to be on the mat.

Respondents 7

My name is Mansi, and I am in Class 10 at a government school in Guwahati. I've always been quite good academically. I typically get more than 80%, and my teachers like that I'm serious about studies. But dancing is one thing I like the most. Be it classical or Bollywood, I feel alive when I'm dancing. I have been on stage a number of times, and the thunderous applause that I receive after each performance is something that I live for. My parents also expect me to keep high scores. They keep reminding me, "This is your board year, Mansi. Don't lose concentration." At times, I feel under a lot of pressure not just to study, but also to live up to all expectations from people since I have performed so well till now. There are times when pressure becomes overwhelming. I recall crying in the dark at night following a math test where I performed poorly. Despite my efforts, it felt as if I had failed everyone's expectations. Worse still is that my parents, my dad in particular, tend to compare me with my cousin who scored 95% last year. They compare me, saying, "She studied day and night, look where she is now." I detest those comparisons. They make me feel inadequate even when I work so hard. At times, when the pressure becomes too intense, I think of giving up. I think of closing my door and running away from everything. At those moments, thoughts such as, "What if I let them down? What if I fail to handle everything?" fill my mind. It is difficult to balance studies and my dance practice. I practice every weekend, but when it's exam time or assignment time, I must give up dancing. It pains me because dance is the only activity that reduces my stress. And phones and YouTube, yes, they are distractions too. I find myself watching dance videos when I must study chapters. It's like I am conflicted between pressure and passion. I believe schools could grant us some breathing room. Possibly include creativity classes or relaxation exercises. Not all students are machines that can study day and night. I do attempt to organize my studies. I create a schedule prior to exams, yet I don't always adhere to it. I get slack sometimes, sometimes exhausted. But I am attempting to remain more disciplined. There is pressure from teachers too. Some teachers warn severely for trivial errors. They tell you some such thing, "Class 10 is not a joke. If you fail now, your future is over." Such words actually. They really. Really hurt. Stress makes me behave differently a lot. I get annoyed easily, even when my little brother, who just wants to play with me. I become indifferent to food, and even dancing sometimes. At the time of exams, my sleep is disrupted. I keep waking up at midnight thinking, "Have I missed something?" I get nervous, and even eight hours of sleep is not sufficient to make me feel new.

Yes, I have felt depressed and de-motivated due to studies. Once I got only 68 in Science, and I was not able to hold back my tears. It felt like I was a failure as a daughter, as a student. During exams, I get nervous, anxious, and restless. I keep changing it time and time again, questioning my abilities. Sometimes, I even consider giving up my dream to be a professional dancer because "What if my marks drop?" Stress does not treat me well in my mind. I feel choked, as if everything is falling over me. I pretend to be normal outside, but deep down inside, I'm drowning. I have never spoken to any school faculty members about this. We do not have a counselor, and I don't think teachers would believe me if I told them I was stressed. I have been trying breathing techniques after doing a YouTube video. It helps settle me a bit. I have begun to journal writing my thoughts down in a notebook in secret. Breaks matter. I do 15-minute dance breaks while studying. Doing a few moves lightens my head. It keeps me going. Daily workload management is still a challenge, but I attempt the difficult subjects first and then move to the less challenging ones. I don't attempt to study everything in a day anymore. It's hard to balance dancing and studying, but I attempt to leave some time for both. I don't want to lose either. We don't have a school counselor, but if there was someone there to just listen not judge I think it would make a difference. The most significant thing I've learned is that it's acceptable to take a break. Mental health is just as important as marks. When I'm stressed with exams, I listen to my favourite song and simply move my body to the rhythm. Even if I do not dance completely, it makes me feel alive once more. It helps very much to talk to my best friend. She is also fond of dance, and we are close to one another. We share our anxiety and sometimes laugh away. I've begun to put my notes into individual files and highlight them. It keeps me focused and prevents that last-minute panic. I'm still discovering how to juggle expectations and taking care of myself, but I do know this I want to excel both in the classroom and on stage.

Respondents 8

Hello, I'm Rohan, a Class 10 student of one of the best private schools in Guwahati. Paper-perfect, they say I'm above 90%, I take part in science quizzes, and I even have a scholarship to my name. But behind the glamour of all this, there is an insistent pressure of doing more, becoming more, and never failing. My relatives also look up to me. My family doesn't expect anything less than the best.

My dad always says, "You have to get into IIT. That's the target." I sometimes feel that I'm not studying for myself, but for their aspirations. Their hopes pressurize me on a daily basis.

relatives even discuss my performance with other cousins or neighbors. "You're the topper, aren't you?" they ask.

The words may sound encouraging, but they cage me. I feel like the expectation pressure is suffocating me most of the time. I may perform well, but sometimes I find myself thinking, "What if I am not going to be able to keep up? What if I let everyone down?" There were instances when I just wanted to give up, ditch my books, and just be gone for a bit.

At times of high pressure, such as pre-boards, I just can't think. My brain is full of thoughts "What if I forget everything?" "What if I blank out on the exam?" "Studying and all other activities is a nightmare. I played the guitar once, but now I've stopped it because I barely have time. My schedule is filled with tuitions, assignments, and schoolwork. It's tiring.

And yes, I am distracted by my phone. Occasionally, I spend hours browsing Instagram as a stress relief. And then I feel guilty because I wasted time. Honestly, I feel that schools should have mental wellness lessons. We need to be judged less and understood more by teachers. Pressure does not always equal results. I attempt to schedule my study time through apps and planners. It does help somewhat. I study in blocks of work—such as 45 minutes of work with 10-minute breaks. But once exams approach, all plans go for a toss. School pressure is also immense. Our teachers are strict and tend to remind us, "This is a make-or-break year." Once, a teacher publicly embarrassed me for getting 78 in Chemistry. It crushed my confidence. Academic stress transforms me. I am easily irritated. I yell at my sister or ignore friends. My mood swings are extreme before exams. Sleep? The first casualty. I sleep late, wake up early, and even so, I feel mentally exhausted. My head is dazed. There have been times that I cried in secret because I couldn't handle it. I felt down, like I wasn't enough. I even doubted my worth. Even after sleeping, I still feel drained. The pressure doesn't abate, even in my sleep. I dream about question papers! I get discouraged at times. I ask myself, "What's the point of all this?" It's like being on a treadmill nonstop, but getting nowhere. When exams loom near, I start to feel fear, worry, and frustration. I keep to myself, lock myself up in my room, and just try to get through each day. I even considered leaving coaching once. I informed my parents I didn't wish to study anymore, but they replied, "You're being emotional. "This stress impacts me psychologically. I feel I am losing grip. I overanalyze everything marks, future, even minor errors. I wish we had a counselor we could see, but we don't. Even if we did, I don't know that I'd feel comfortable enough to open up. There's still stigma regarding "mental health. "I've been practicing deep breathing exercises. Five minutes of slow breathing calms me down. I also

meditate with a cell phone app. These methods assist, but not every time. Some days I improve, some days it seems pointless. But I persist. Break times assist. I look at light comedy programs during breaks. It calms my mind momentarily, long enough to start again. I juggle workloads by spreading topics throughout the week. I attempt to complete difficult topics first so I can close the day on an easier one. It's difficult to balance studies and hobbies. I miss the guitar. But I squeeze in 10 minutes here and there. There is a counsellor in our school, but I never went. Nobody really discusses it openly. I wish asking for help was just normal. There is one valuable thing that I have learned: perfection is not the key. I'm learning how to tolerate mistakes and forgive myself. When I'm stressed, I listen to music slow instrumental songs. They calm my mind like anything else. Conversing with my mom also works. Sometimes she doesn't say a word, and that's all right. I feel a bit less heavy afterwards. To prevent last-minute frantically, I make to-do lists and sort out my materials in folders. I've gotten a little more methodical. Despite all this stress, I do my best to keep going. Not only for the marks, but for my own benefit as well. I want to create room for both success and sanity.

Respondents 9

Hello, I am Priya, a Class 10 student in a government school in Guwahati. I belong to a middle-class family my father is a small shop owner and my mother is a housewife. We're not very poor, but we need to think twice before spending any extra money. That fact influences everything, right from how I study to what I dream of. Education is the only means to gain a future in my family. Yes, my parents do expect me to get good marks. Always they say, "Study hard if you want to lead a better life than us." I know that they do this with good intentions, but it's a weight on my head. I am always under pressure not only from my parents but from teachers and neighbors as well. Whenever someone asks me about marks, I feel like I am being weighed all the time. When I don't get good marks, it is as if I have failed not only in exams but in life. My parents will constantly compare my grades to other children in the colony particularly one boy who always leads. "Look at him," they'll say. "Why can't you be like him?" It stings because I do my best, but schoolwork just isn't something that comes easily to me. Sometimes I just feel like quitting. There are some nights I just sit and stare at my books and think, "Why am I even trying? What's the point?" But I do not tell anybody. I just keep it to myself. When there is high pressure such as exams, my brain is filled with fear and uncertainty. "What if I am not good enough?" "Will mum and dad yell at me?" These worries consume me. I can't focus when my head is so busy. It's difficult to juggle all of that. I am required to assist with household chores as well doing the dishes, assisting my little brother with homework. So

my study time is shorted. And yes, I am distracted by my phone. I have a lot of fashion accounts that I follow on Instagram. I hope to become a model one day. Seeing those reels gives me a small hope, even though I know my parents won't agree. Schools should discuss stress more. We should have sessions where we can explain how we feel without being judged. That would help a lot. I attempt a loose schedule, primarily after completing domestic duties. I segment my topics into sections and take brief intermissions, but at other times I just feel exhausted. My instructors are well-meaning, but reminders from them constantly that this is a "do-or-die year" make me anxious. At times I feel they care only about outcomes, not our well-being. Stress impacts my mood greatly. I easily become angry or want to cry without any reason. I keep people at a distance, remain silent even in the house. I sleep in a mess during exams. I sleep, but my mind continues replaying chapters that I didn't complete. Even after sleeping, I wake up exhausted. Yes, I've been sad, like really depressed, due to studies. I've cried quietly while faking studying. I just feel trapped. I wake up fatigued even if I've slept for 7 hours. The stress doesn't dissipate it just lingers within me. There are times when I'm demotivated. I remain with my books and think, "What's the point? I won't succeed anyway." When exams approach, I get frightened. My heart beats fast. I eat less. I smile less. Everything is too much. Yes, I've considered giving up on my modeling dream. I've even considered escaping from all this stress. But I've never confessed it to anyone. This stress affects me both mentally and emotionally. I feel that I have an invisible burden. I pretend to smile at school, but I am just tired on the inside. I don't feel comfortable discussing these with my teachers or school administrators. I don't think they will be able to understand. And we do not even have a counsellor either. I do deep breathing sometimes when it's too much. Just 5 minutes of my attention on my breathing helps somewhat. I learned it from a video on YouTube. It doesn't fix everything, but it works for a time. I feel better after that. I take time out when I can. Sometimes I sit on the terrace, observe the sky, or simply draw outfits in my notebook. It relaxes me. I coordinate my studies by concentrating more on topics I find simple. I don't overload myself. I just want to pass, straight up. I don't officially have many extracurriculars, but I attempt to keep modeling my aspiration. I draw clothes, stand in front of the mirror when no one's around. We don't have a school counselor. I wish we did. Perhaps then I could speak without fear of being laughed at or dismissed. The most important thing I've learned is that peace of mind is important. If I'm not all right on the inside, no grades will ever satisfy. When I get stressed out, I dance by myself in my bedroom. It allows me to release tension. Movement and music allow me a moment of freedom. I call my best friend when I am really down. She gets me and says to me, "You'll make it someday." I've begun planning my books, putting up reminders, and creating a little

study calendar. It lessens last-minute panic. Despite all the anxiety, I still have hope that one day I will be able to live my dream and be proud of myself regardless of what my marks state.

Respondents 10

My name is Ayesha, and I am a Class 10 student in a government school in Guwahati. I've been having a hard time for the last few months. I was detected with a health problem concerning my nerves. Due to this, I usually feel weak and have headaches. It has impacted everything my studies, my concentration, and even how I feel from inside. My parents hope that I will perform well in exams. They remind me of the fact that, "Just one more year, and you'll be free." However, with my health, even sitting among books for a long time makes me dizzy. Nevertheless, I attempt because I don't wish to disappoint them. I feel stressed by my family and by other people around me. Everyone keeps asking, "Are you going to get first division?" It embarrasses me when I can't say "yes" with confidence. My parents don't compare me as much, but they become quiet when they hear that someone else's child is performing well. That silence speaks volumes. I know they wish I could be like them. There were times when I felt like giving up. I'd have my books laid out in front of me, lying in bed, but I'd just sob because my brain wasn't functioning. The disease was exhausting me all the time. When things get too intense, bad thoughts come into my mind such as, "Perhaps I won't be able to pass," or "What if I fail and everyone will be disappointed?" These thoughts don't allow me to sleep peacefully. It's very difficult to balance health and studies. I have doctor visits, and at times I must take a break during the day. That shortens my study time. I feel bad for that. I do get distracted. I browse my phone at times just to get away from stress. But I know that wastes time too. I believe schools would do better to let us express ourselves openly regarding our physical and mental health. We must have someone to speak to when things become difficult. I make arrangements for my studies by dividing chapters into tiny segments. I read a little in the morning and again in the evening after I rest. It does decrease my stress somewhat. But yes, our teachers also pressurize us greatly. They constantly say, "It is your board year, you need to work harder." I feel unhappy when I am unable to catch up. My mood is extremely dull now. I am annoyed. At times I scream or cry unnecessarily. I miss the happy me. Stress interferes with my sleep negatively. Even when I would like to sleep, I'm constantly thinking about what I have not covered. I wake up exhausted. Numerous times, I've been feeling down. I don't even communicate with anyone. I simply remain silent and act as if everything is fine. Although I sleep for hours, I still feel exhausted. Perhaps it's the fact that my mind never rests I sometimes

feel that I should give up. That nothing will get better, no matter what I do. But then I think of my mom's advice: "Just try your best." When exams are near, I get fearful. I lose appetite, become nervous, and feel isolated even amidst a crowd. Yes, the idea of giving up on my dreams has crossed my mind. I even thought about quitting school once. But I'm still clinging on. This anxiety makes me feel shattered from the inside. I don't know how to say it, but it's like I am suffocating slowly. No, I do not feel safe discussing this with any of the teachers. I feel that they may not comprehend my sickness. We don't have a school counsellor. I do some simple breathing techniques when I get nervous. It relaxes me a bit and calms my nerves. These strategies work for a while, but I still remain weighed down afterward. I suppose I require more substantial assistance. I have short breaks when I study drink water, lie down, or listen to soothing music. It provides my mind with a break. I cope with my studies by completing one thing at a time. I no longer attempt to do everything. I simply do what I am able. I don't engage in any additional activities anymore. I liked drawing, but I'm no longer energetic enough. We have no school counselling. If we did, perhaps students like me would feel heard and understood. Something significant that I've learned is that I need to be kind to myself. If I cannot study today, it's fine I will attempt again tomorrow. When I'm anxious about exams, I listen to soothing music or observe the sky through my window. It calms me down. I converse with my cousin sister when I'm depressed. She never judges me. That matters a lot. I attempt to stay organized keeping books in order, creating a small timetable. It prevents me from panicking at the last moment. Although life is tough at the moment, I still hope. I wish to get through this year and advance, bit by bit.

Respondents 11

My name is Rajdeep, and I am a student in Class 10 in one of the well-known private schools of Guwahati. My parents have anticipated top scores from me since I was in Class 5. They've always instructed me, "You can be the best, so don't settle for anything less than that." Their pressure motivates me, but at the same time, they burden me. It's not even my family my relatives, teachers, even neighbors expect me to excel. I tend to feel that if I get anything below 90%, I'll let everyone down. That pressure never goes away. My parents put my grades against my cousin who is studying in Delhi. "See, she got 95% in all subjects," they mention. I don't let it get to me but it does. I feel like I'm constantly racing. There were times when I wanted to give up. Once, after I got low in a math test, I cried at night silently and wondered if maybe I'm not as intelligent as people imagine. During examination time, I become very nervous. I have thoughts like "What if I forget all of it?" or "What if my mind blanks during the exam

hall?" My heart beats fast, and I fail to concentrate. It is impossible to balance studies with anything else. I have had to drop my weekend cricket matches and keyboard lessons. My life is all about books now. I get out my phone to take a 5-minute break at times, but find myself scrolling for 30 minutes instead. Then I feel guilty and rush back to study. I wish our school would include more mental health exercises or grant us a day a week free from academic stress. That would give us some air to breathe. I schedule my studies with a tight regimen, but in all honesty, it adds more stress than serenity. Nevertheless, I try to stick to it so that I won't be left behind. Teachers want us to be serious twenty-four-seven. "This is board year, no excuses," they remind us. It's as if we are machines and can't afford to show weakness. Due to all this tension, my mood is usually low. I become short-tempered easily and fight with my parents over trifles. I sleep for six hours, but it doesn't seem enough. I dream about exams and wake up feeling nervous. I never feel rejuvenated. Yes, I have been very down many times. It's as if I'm drowning in expectations. Even after sleeping, I remain mentally exhausted like my mind is still working even when I sleep. There are days when I feel so lackadaisical that I look at my books but cannot read even one line. I wonder what is wrong with me. When exams are near, I am more fearful than anything else. Eating even seems like a time-wasting exercise. I've considered abandoning my aspiration to be an engineer. I used to think perhaps I should simply do something less stressful to break free from all this. Stress burdens me psychologically a great deal. I feel as if my chest is weighed down and I can no longer smile naturally. We don't have any school counsellor. Even if I would like to discuss something, there isn't anybody in school who is trained to listen. Sometimes I do breathing exercises that I know from YouTube. It calms me down for a while. Yes, it works, but only for a short while. After a while, the pressure comes back. I take breaks while studying walk on the balcony, have tea, or sit with my eyes closed for 10 minutes. It freshens me up. To control workload, I split chapters and plan for each day. But it gets too much sometimes, particularly when tests are back-to-back. I don't do any extracurricular activities anymore. Previously I enjoyed drama club, but now I don't have time. We don't get any good counseling in school. I believe it would make a big difference if someone would just listen to us without judging us. What I've learned about handling stress is: don't bottle it all up. Talk to someone, write it down, or take a quick break. When I'm panicking, I breathe deeply with my eyes closed, or write down what I'm thinking on paper. It keeps me calm. I mostly communicate with my older sister. She's in college and knows what I'm experiencing. That conversation lightens me up. Yes, I do attempt to be organized organizing my notes and studying for a calendar. It prevents last-minute panic. Despite things being tough,

I still need to prove to my parents and myself that I can do it. But I just wish the process didn't feel so heavy.

Respondents 12

I am Ritu and I am a student of Class 10 in a government school in Guwahati. I belong to a middle-class family. My father is a shopkeeper and my mother is a housewife. My parents are simple, hardworking, and they want me to secure good grades. They think that if I perform well academically, I will lead a better life than they do. They don't tell me harshly, but I sense that they have high expectations from me. At times, I feel more pressured by society than by my family. They say things such as, "She's the hope of the family," and I become apprehensive. I tend to think too much about outcomes. Whenever I get fewer marks, my parents judge me with my cousin who is studying in a private school. It makes me feel insufficient despite my best efforts. There have been times when I thought about quitting. Last year final exam time, I cried due to the inability to grip science chapters. Even I thought of escaping from everything for some time. At times of pressure, I feel my mind filled with things like "What if I fail?" or "Will my parents ever stop believing in me?" Studying alongside supporting at home is difficult. Sometimes I get to cook and take care of my little brother too. By the time I settle down to study, I'm exhausted. Phones and social media distract me as well. I avoid them, but sometimes I use it just to relieve stress. I believe schools should have counseling classes and mental health workshops. We should learn how to deal with pressure, not how to score marks. I don't plan my study at all. I study whenever I find time. But I try to study one topic daily so that later I do not panic. My teachers are harsh. They simply repeat "Board exam! Board exam!" on a daily basis. Their remark is more like a threat than an encouragement. Study stress makes me extremely cranky. I become annoyed quickly, and I stop communicating with people when I'm under too much stress. Yes, I think academic pressure causes depression. I have seen my friend getting into it—she even stopped eating normally due to examination pressure. My sleep is disrupted when exams are around. I keep thinking of the syllabus even while attempting to sleep. I wake up during the middle of the night sometimes. Yes, I have felt extremely unhappy due to studies. After I failed a class test, and I did not leave my room the entire day. Even after sleeping for seven hours, I remain sleepy. It's as if my brain does not really sleep. There are times when I am thinking like, "Why am I studying too hard? What if I still fail?" That thought discourages me. When exam time approaches, I get scared. I have stomach aches, my hands tremble while writing stress overwhelms my body. Yes, I have considered giving up on my aspirations and just getting a small job to help my family, especially when the pressure becomes

unbearable. Mentally, it makes me feel imprisoned. Emotionally, I become withdrawn, like I don't feel like talking to anyone. We don't have any school counselor. Even if we did, I don't know if I'd feel okay to talk to them unless they were nice. I do deep breathing when I'm really stressed out. I learned from a video. It calms me down for a bit. Yes, it does calm me somewhat. At least it gives me a respite from all the depressing thoughts. I take breaks while studying. I either walk out or simply listen to music for 10 minutes. It makes me feel refreshed. I classify my subjects by day and set myself tiny goals. It makes me feel like I am the boss of my work. It is difficult to balance studies with household chores, but I do my best. I wake up early to study before others wake up. No, we lack adequate school counseling. But I just wish that we had a person that we could talk to that knew what we go through. One thing that I have learned is never to bottle everything up. To talk to someone, even a friend, does a lot for you. When I am stressed, I close my eyes and listen to slow music. It makes me feel like everything will be alright. Yes, I do talk to my best friend. She does not judge me. That conversation makes me strong. I attempt to remain focused by having a notebook where I record what I need to complete on a given day.

Respondents 13

My name is Ayushi, and I am a student in Class 10 at a private school in Guwahati. My parents are very strict, my dad in particular. They want me to be in the top ten of my class. My parents don't tell me straight out each day, but I know they do you know, they need high grades from me, period. Due to their expectations, I always feel under pressure. Even if I score 80%, my father explains, "Where are the remaining 20?" My relatives also ask, "What was your rank?" and compare me with my cousins. It makes me tense and insecure. Yes, my parents compare my grades to others a lot. I once scored below a neighbor's son, and my father told me that I have to concentrate more and not waste time. That hurt me very much. There are days when I want to give up because I study so much and yet cannot make them happy. When the pressure is too strong, I think negative. I feel that I am a failure or that I will never succeed. I also lose interest in my favourite things, such as drawing. To balance studies and hobbies seems to be out of reach now. I attempt to study, but my phone is distracting. I find myself browsing reels for hours. I know it's bad, but sometimes it's my sole release from pressure. I wish our school would provide us with fewer homework assignments and more mental health care. I don't have a fixed study routine. I simply study whenever I find time. Sometimes I sit up late at night and wake up exhausted. Our teachers also pressurize us too much "Your boards are near!" They keep telling us this. I feel like I am not doing anything. The stress actually impacts my mood. I cry

over little things and remain agitated. I believe there can be depression because of academic pressure. My friend even once told me that she wanted to vanish. At night, I think too much and it spoils my sleep. Even if I sleep for 8 hours, I feel drained mentally. There are some days when I don't even want to do anything. I'm demotivated and also doubt my capabilities. Once exams approach, I become anxious and nervous. I have a pain in my stomach, and my hands turn cold. I have considered quitting several times. I even considered not attending school anymore. It is too stressful sometimes. It gets to me mentally I feel tiny and inadequate. I don't feel comfortable confiding in teachers. I think they won't listen to me. I have begun practicing deep breathing and writing journal entries. It calms me down somewhat. At times, I do music or draw when I have breaks. These little things are helpful. I attempt to control my studies with to-do lists and day-by-day goals. I also ceased trying to be perfect and began emphasizing effort. I don't do extracurriculars very much anymore. I wish I could paint or dance more, but I worry about losing study time. Our school doesn't offer counseling services, and I think that's a huge issue. What I have understood is that it's fine to request help and take breaks. I speak to my older sister when I'm agitated. She listens and helps me out. Prior to exams, I silently sit and inhale deeply in order to relax. Talking to my friend helps me feel less alone. And I try to keep my books and time organized to avoid last-minute panic. Even though I'm still stressed, I'm learning slowly how to handle it better.

Respondents 14

Hello, I'm Sameer and I'm in Class 10. I'm not a topper student, but I always give my best. Both my parents work my mother is a nurse, and my dad works in an office. They wish me good grades, but they don't put too much pressure on me. However, I know that they wish for me to get good grades. I experience stress primarily from friends and school. Everyone speaks of boards, marks, and tuition. It becomes suffocating. Some of my teachers compare me with the toppers, and it makes me feel inadequate. My parents rarely compare me, but relatives do. I detest it when someone utters, "That boy scored 95%. How about you?" It completely saddens me. Once after poor grades in mathematics, I wanted to give up. I wept that day. During times of high pressure, I want to hide. I overanalyze each blunder. It is extremely hard to balance studying and other activities. In the past, I used to play cricket in the evenings but now don't go out much. I get distracted by my phone a lot. I think I will just watch for 10 minutes, but it takes an hour. Schools should educate us about managing stress rather than putting additional pressure on us. I wish there were enjoyable classes or counseling. I try to create a schedule, but I don't always stick to it. I only study weak subjects prior to exams. School teachers

continuously remind us of our low scores. Some even shame students. All this spoils my mood greatly. I get annoyed, sometimes even with my parents. I believe study pressure can lead to depression. I've experienced it myself and seen it in my classmates. I don't sleep well during exams. I think about what I didn't cover. I wake up exhausted. Even if I sleep for 8 hours, my head is heavy. It saps my energy. Sometimes I think that it's not even worth it. But I go on. When exams are near, I worry. I even have stomach issues. At one time, I wanted to drop out of school, but I remembered my goals. Stress makes me feel lonely and worried mentally. I've never discussed this with a teacher. I'm afraid they might say that I'm making excuses. I began practicing breathing exercises. They help calm me down a little bit. I take breaks, go for a walk, or listen to music. To organize studies, I finish small bits every day. I also treat myself to breaks. I'm attempting to juggle studies and cricket once more, at least once a week. We do not have a counselor within the school, and I feel we truly need one. The key thing that I have learned is to be nice to myself. I discuss everything with my best friend. He doesn't judge and always listens. Prior to exams, I listen to soothing music or drink water. Conversation with my sister also helps. I keep my study space tidy and have a checklist so I don't have last-minute stress.

Respondents 15

My name is Puja, and I am a student of Class 10 in a government school in Guwahati. Honestly, I am poor at studies. I make efforts, but somehow I always score low. My parents do not think that I will be able to pass the board exams. They call me and say, "You are useless in studies" or "You will definitely fail." Listening to that daily made me think that maybe they are correct. I am highly stressed, not only from school but at home as well. My dad becomes irate when I perform poorly. He yells at me and tells me that I should be like my cousin who consistently comes first in school. I am constantly being compared, and it makes me feel inferior. I lose hope when everyone already expects that I am going to fail. After each test, I become frightened to return home. I attempt to study, but nothing is retained by my mind. My own confidence is extremely low these days. At times I think that it is of no use trying. Even my younger brother performs better than me, and it makes me blush. I've thought many times that I am not as smart as other people. I feel weighed down inside, like I am always carrying stress. I want to learn, but when no one believes in you, it is really difficult. I don't like any hobby these days. I did enjoy doing rangolis and watching dance videos, but I quit. I feel guilty for doing anything at all except for studying, even though I'm not actually able to study effectively. I keep getting distracted by my phone or even by thinking too much. I believe schools can do more for students like me. Teachers are most concerned about the best students. I feel neglected. At

times, when I raise my hand to ask a question, they tell me, "You won't understand anyway." That hurts me. I do not have a proper study routine. I simply sit with my textbooks but constantly worry about how I will fail. I do not feel supported by parents or teachers. My mind gets fatigued before even beginning to study. Due to this pressure, I have become more quiet. I don't utter a word in class. I eat lunch by myself. I think academic pressure could make students like me extremely sad and lonely. There are nights when I cry myself to sleep. I sleep, but my sleep is not comfortable. I wake up regretful of what I did not study. Even if I sleep for 8 hours, my brain still feels exhausted. I think something is wrong with me. Exam days are my worst days. I become scared, I forget what I studied, and at times I feel like fleeing. There were a few moments when I felt that I should give up studies. Once I even thought of not showing up in the board exams. Mentally, it feels like I'm sinking. No one seems to understand how much pressure I feel. I've never talked to any teacher about this. I feel like they'll laugh or scold me. To deal with it, I sometimes speak with my friend who is also poor at studies. We exchange our fears and feel slightly better. I also give myself breaks and assist my mother in the kitchen to keep away from books for some time. I now work in small segments and concentrate only on crucial topics. I quit attempting to get everything done. I attempt to remind myself that passing for the moment is all I need. I don't participate in any extracurricular activities. I believe that I don't deserve it. Our school lacks a counselor. I wish that we had someone to speak with without judgment. The most significant thing that I learned is that I must have faith in myself even when other people do not. When it is exam time, I attempt to remain calm and also take water. I also communicate with my best friend who motivates me. I also scribble quick prayers in my notebook for self-confidence. I ensure that I prepare everything the night before so I won't be anxious. I am still afraid, but I'm doing my best every day, even if it's not much.

ANALYSIS

This chapter examines the analysis and interpretation of data collected from 15 Class 10 high school students through in-depth interviews facilitated by a unstructured questionnaire. The aim was to explore the causes of academic stress, its impact on mental health, and the coping strategies working by students. The data were analyzed thematically and are presented under various subheadings as outlined in the study objectives. The perspectives of students are included to provide a narrative interpretation of their experiences. The analysis reflect the emotional, psychological, and social dimensions of academic pressure encountered in the daily lives of students.

4.1 Parental Expectations as a Primary Stressor:

Excessive parental expectations have been identified as a significant source of stress. A considerable number of students reported that their parents placed academic success above all other considerations, often setting goals that were disconnected from the students' personal interests.

"My parents desire for me to pursue a career in medicine, yet I wish to study art. It feels as though I am living out someone else's aspirations."

"Despite my late-night study sessions, if my grades are unsatisfactory, they claim I am not taking my studies seriously enough."

The emotional strain associated with the desire to fulfill these expectations resulted in feelings of guilt, anxiety, and the fear of disappointing others. Some students even concealed their true ambitions to prevent discord within the family.

4.2 Emotional impact due to Academic Stress:

The impact of academic stress on students' emotional health is significant, as highlighted by a primary finding of this research. Majority of the students expressed feelings of anxiety, hopelessness, and being overwhelmed due to the pressure to excel in examinations and maintain high academic standards. This emotional disorder is often ignored by adults, yet it significantly affects students' motivation and overall mood. Students expressed:

"At times, I find myself crying quietly after studying, especially when I struggle to remember anything. I feel like a failure."

"Even before an exam, I start to panic, fearing that something terrible will happen. I find it difficult to sleep or eat properly."

These statements explain that academic stress exceeds more workload; it causes deeper emotional consequences, including sadness, anxiety about failure, and a reduction in self-confidence.

4.3 Lack of time for self-care and hobbies

Many students shared that their daily schedules are filled with schoolwork, tuition, assignments, and preparation for exams, leaving them with hardly any time for relaxation or personal interests. The continuous focus on academic responsibilities means there is often no space left for activities that help them relax or feel emotionally refreshed.

"I used to enjoy drawing, but now I don't even have time for my hobbies," one student shared, expressing a sense of loss and fatigue.

This study explain that how the intense focus on academic achievement often disrupts the overall balance in students' lives. Time meant for hobbies, rest, or self-care is frequently sacrificed to meet academic expectations. As a result, many students feel mentally exhausted and emotionally disconnected from the things that once brought them joy. The absence of these nurturing experiences can hinder both emotional growth and personal well-being.

4.4 Fear of failure and self-doubt

Students frequently expressed feelings of fear regarding failure and ongoing self-doubt, despite having adequately prepared for their examinations.

"I dedicate countless hours in studying, although I still feel that I possess no knowledge. What if I forget everything when it comes time for the test?"

"When I receive low grades, I start to believe that I am incapable of achieving anything."

These feelings affected their concentration, led to sleep disturbances, and occasionally induced panic both prior to and during examinations. These experiences show that academic stress is not just about scoring good marks it goes much deeper. It affects how students see themselves, how they feel about their worth, and how they handle emotions. Many students feel scared of letting their parents or teachers down. This fear makes them believe they are not good enough, even when they try hard. Over time, these negative thoughts can leave emotional scars. Some students begin to lose confidence in themselves and stop believing they can do well. Instead of

seeing mistakes as a chance to learn, they start fearing studies and exams. This makes learning feel like a burden, not a journey. It holds them back both in school and in life.

4.5 Lack of access to school counsellors and mental health support

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One Respondents said, *"In my school, we don't even have a counselor. Even if someone is feeling very low or stressed, they just expect us to manage it on our own."*

Another Respondents shared, *"Sometimes I feel like crying during class, but I know if I go to a teacher, they'll just tell me to focus more and stop overthinking."*

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4.6 Lack of Supportive School Environment

Majority of students shared that their school environment feels unsupportive and demotivating, which adds to their academic stress. Instead of encouragement, many encounter judgment, unrealistic expectations, or a lack of understanding from teachers and peers.

One respondents expressed, *"I do Taekwondo, teachers keep saying that I should focus more on studies and stop wasting time. They don't understand that I'm trying to balance both."*

This lack of appreciation for his extracurricular passion made him feel dismissed and misunderstood at school.

Another, respondents also shared, *"I want to go into modeling, but my teachers always say that it's not a real career. They only support the toppers. That makes me feel small."*

Her creativity and individuality are overlooked, making the school feel like a place where only academic achievers are valued. The experiences shared by the students reveal that many

schools fail to create a nurturing, inclusive atmosphere. Instead of building students up, the environment often increases their fear of judgment and criticism. When students don't feel accepted or safe in their school, their self-esteem suffers. They begin to associate learning with anxiety and fear rather than curiosity and growth. A truly supportive school environment would include teachers who encourage effort over perfection, recognize diverse talents, and foster open conversations. The absence of such a space leaves many students feeling alienated, unheard, and emotionally exhausted during their academic journey.

4.7 Academic comparison and peer pressure

Students frequently reported that comparisons with peers, siblings, and cousins were among the most emotionally taxing sources of academic anxiety. Rather than serving as a source of motivation, these comparisons often elicit feelings of inferiority, jealousy, and self-doubt, especially when students are already grappling with low self-esteem. Ananya conveyed her distress, stating,

"My cousin consistently scores above 90, and my parents are always reminding me of that. It feels as though no matter what I achieve, it is insufficient. Consequently, I have ceased sharing my grades with them."

The pressure to measure up to another's success left her feeling overlooked and inadequate. Rupa, who comes from a financially disadvantaged background, remarked,

"Even my younger brother sometimes outperforms me, and I feel as though I am letting everyone down. I make an effort, but they only focus on the grades."

Her self-worth is being reduced to numerical scores, and the act of comparing herself to others has led her to withdraw emotionally. These instances explain how academic comparison not only affects students' motivation but also has a direct impact on their identity and emotional health. Many begin to evaluate themselves based on the accomplishments of others, fostering a culture of silent competition rather than one of support and encouragement. When competition suppresses collaboration, students are less inclined to seek help or celebrate each other's achievements. Instead, they silently carry the burden of feeling "not good enough" even when they are performing to the best of their abilities. A more nurturing approach would involve individual recognition and creating an environment where every student feels acknowledged, regardless of their academic standing.

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CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

This chapter presents a comprehensive discussion and analysis of the findings derived from story-telling responses provided by 15 Class 10 students. Each student expressed the impact of academic pressure on their mental health, emotional state, daily routines, and coping strategies. These findings are interpreted through the lenses of Self-Regulation Theory and the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping. Furthermore, significant themes are compared with current scholarly research to identify patterns, reinforce findings, and create a well-founded narrative concerning academic pressure and the mental health of youth.

5.1 A prevalent theme among most respondents was the significant pressure exerted by parents to excel academically. Many students expressed how their parents placed excessive importance on grades, often linking academic achievement to future security. The constant reminders to "perform better" or to "achieve top marks" burdened them and left them feeling emotionally exhausted. *This aligns with Self-Regulation Theory*, which posits that striving to meet externally imposed goals (such as those set by parents) rather than self-directed objectives leads to emotional fatigue and diminished motivation. Also, the *Transactional Model of Stress and Coping* explains that such pressure is perceived as a threat when it exceeds the student's ability to cope. The articles depict that parental pressure, especially in the absence of emotional support, significantly contributes to stress among adolescents. *Deb et al. (2015) and Ga-as et al. (2024)*.

5.2 The emotional toll of academic stress was clearly reflected in the narratives of the students. For instance, students described nights filled with tears, feelings of despair, and deep-seated anxiety. Numerous students expressed a sense of isolation, saying that they felt ignored by those around them. These emotional burdens indicate a direct risk to psychological well-being.

According to Transactional Model the theory proposed by Lazarus and Folkman, when coping mechanisms are insufficient to address perceived challenges, emotional confusion ensues. The nervousness of letting down family members, coupled with internal self-doubt, illustrates the detrimental impact of stress on their self-esteem.

Research conducted by Pascoe et al. (2020) supports the notion that persistent academic stress can lead to depression, anxiety, and emotional disconnection in adolescents.

5.3 Comparisons with siblings, cousins, and classmates were identified as some of the most psychologically demotivating stressors for students within this sample. A significant number of students expressed that the constant comparisons with others led to deep feelings of inadequacy and a lack of motivation. Ayushi shared that despite achieving an 80% score, her

father questioned, "Why didn't get full marks?" a apparently simple investigation that carried significant emotional weight. Similarly, students expressed the pain of being evaluated against her cousin who attends a local school. Instead of receiving encouragement, she felt that her efforts went unrecognized and were continuously insufficient. These comparisons often led students to internalize the belief that their value is depending upon others.

According to *Self-Regulation Theory* proposed by *Baumeister & Vohs*, such external pressures distract students from establishing meaningful, personal objectives and maintaining basic motivation. Rather than concentrating on learning or personal growth, students begin to seek external validation, which erodes their self-trust. They may come to believe that no matter how much effort they exert, they will never measure up. The consequences of such comparisons extend beyond academic performance, they significantly affect emotional well-being. Respondents reported feelings of demotivation, mental fatigue, and even anxiety about sharing their results with family members. This often led to emotional withdrawal and an increased fear of failure, prolonging a harmful cycle of stress and diminished academic motivation

The articles supported by *Hachintu et al. (2021)* and *Subramani et al. (2017)*, who noted that while comparisons can foster competitiveness, they often prove counterproductive for students who already possess low self-esteem or insufficient emotional support. The pressure to "catch up" or "validate oneself" to parents or peers can impose an overwhelming strain on a student's internal flexibility, particularly during adolescence, a critical period for identity development.

5.4 Numerous students participating in this research expressed that the demands of academia left them with insufficient time for their hobbies. Their calendars were dominated by classes, assignments, and exam preparations, relegating their hobbies and self-care to a secondary position. Mansi, who excels academically and harbours a deep passion for dancing, mentioned that she had to decline her dance practice during examination periods. She expressed that dancing invigorated her spirit, yet she found herself with little time for it.

Mridupaban, a competitor at the national level in Taekwondo, recounted the challenges of balancing both sports and academic responsibilities. He shared that after stable extensive hours of physical training, he was still required to study late into the night, which left him both mentally and physically drained. These students explain that when students are compelled to abandon their valued activities, they often experience feelings of frustration, unhappiness, and fatigue. They begin to perceive their studies not as an opportunity for learning but rather as an

difficult responsibility. *The Self-Regulation Theory* (Baumeister & Vohs,) posits that this theory occurs because participation in pleasurable activities enables individuals to replace their emotional reserves. In the absence of time for hobbies or relaxation, students may find their motivation waning and their capacity to manage stress.

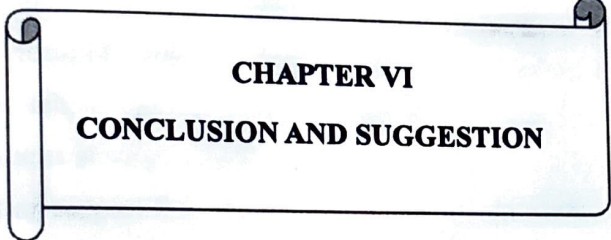
This concept is further supported by *Subramani et al.* who explain that a lack of self-care and creative expression impairs academic stress. When students are poor of opportunities to relax, engage in hobbies, or prioritize their well-being, they are at a sensitive risk of experiencing burnout. Over time, this can finish in emotional exhaustion and a decline in both academic achievement and mental health.

5.5 One of the most concerning issues highlighted during the interviews was the insufficient mental health support available in the majority of schools. A significant number of students indicated that their institutions either lacked a counsellor or that the existing support mechanisms were ineffective and hard to access. For instance, Rohan, an typical student, admitted that while his school employed a counsellor, he never felt comfortable discussing his concerns with them. He feared that revealing his weaknesses would make him appear weak or that his problems would not be taken seriously. Similarly, Priya, who mentioned that her school did not have a counsellor. Frequently feeling emotionally exhausted, she was uncertain about where to seek help, and confiding in teachers was not a practical option for her, as she worried about being misunderstood or judged. The lack of accessible and non-judgmental emotional support leads many students to suppress their feelings. They internalize their stress, hide their difficulties, and continue to perform under pressure, all while suffering in silence. *According to the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping* (Lazarus & Folkman), emotional and social support are essential resources for managing stress. When students are denied these forms of support, they lack the necessary tools to process their emotions or seek assistance, which often results in feelings of isolation, anxiety, and emotional breakdown.

The article supported by *Strom et al. (2021)* and *Udayan (2023)* indicate that students attending schools without structured counselling services or mental health initiatives face a heightened risk of experiencing significant levels of stress, anxiety, and depressive symptoms. Furthermore, they are less likely to engage in healthy coping strategies.

These findings are corroborated by the outcomes of this research. Students experience stress not only from examinations and academic performance; they are also burdened by the absence of individuals with whom to share their thoughts people who would listen to them without

passing judgment. This lack of a consistent support system within educational institutions transforms academic pressure into an unseen clash. In certain cases, it even poses a threat to the emotional and psychological well-being of students.



CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The study aims to understand the impact of academic pressure on the psychological health of high school students, particularly those in Class 10. Through comprehensive narrative interviews conducted with fifteen students from various socioeconomic backgrounds and levels of academic success, the research uncovered the complex and often distressing realities that students endure due to academic pressure. The findings indicate that academic pressure is not merely a singular issue but rather a multifaceted burden influenced by parental expectations, peer rivalry, the school environment, teacher conduct, and individual aspirations. A majority of students expressed emotional distress, including anxiety, sadness, feelings of inadequacy, fear of failure, and fatigue. These experiences were not exclusive to low-achieving students, even those who excelled felt the pressure to maintain their performance.

The Transactional Model of Stress and Coping proposed by Lazarus & Folkman was relevant throughout this research, as students expressed how they assessed their educational situations and coped with various strategies such as self-talk, distraction, listening to music, drawing, meditation, or seeking support from friends and family. However, these coping strategies were not always effective, especially in the absence of formal institutional support like school counsellors. Additionally, the Self-Regulation Theory put forth by Baumeister & Vo was relevant to the challenges of time management, emotional regulation, and self-control that students encountered. When academic demands became overwhelming and there was little opportunity for leisure activities or self-care, students reported feeling emotionally exhausted, unmotivated, and detached from their personal goals and values. The majority indicated that their sense of self-worth had become solely linked to academic success, which significantly impacted their mental health.

Another significant determine is that educational environments frequently lack sufficient mental health resources. Most participants reported that their schools were lacking of counsellors or that they felt unable to discuss their concerns with teachers due to fears of judgment or repercussions. This absence of supportive infrastructure left many students to confront their stress in isolation, leading to a prevalence of internalized issues and, in certain cases, depression or emotional breakdown.

Furthermore, the significance of social and familial expectations should not be overlooked. Students reported feeling compared to their siblings, cousins, or neighbors, which led to feelings of demotivation, diminished self-esteem, and emotional disconnection from their families. While many parents believed they were encouraging their children, their elevated

expectations often resulted in a burden rather than a source of motivation. Despite these challenges, students exhibited resilience by developing their own coping strategies, such as journaling, setting daily goals, listening to music, or seeking support from friends. However, these coping mechanisms proved insufficient in the absence of professional mental health support.

In conclusion, this research has demonstrated that academic stress significantly affects the emotional and mental health of high school students. It undermines their self-esteem, emotional stability, sleep habits, relationships with peers, and in certain cases, their confidence for the future. Therefore, it is essential for families, educational institutions, and communities to recognize academic stress as a serious issue and work together to create a more supportive and healthier educational atmosphere.

SUGGESTIONS

Based on the findings of this research and the interview of the students who shared their stories, here are some thoughtful and practical suggestions that can help reduce academic stress and promote emotional well-being among high school students.

6.1. Schools Should Appoint Trained Counsellor.

Many students mentioned that they had no one to talk to in school when they felt stressed. Having a trained counsellor can make a big difference. Students need someone who will listen without judgment and offer emotional support when they are feeling low or overwhelmed.

6.2. Teachers and Parents Need to Be More Understanding.

Some students feel that their teachers only care about marks, and parents sometimes compare them with others. It's important that both teachers and parents understand how harmful this can be. They should focus more on encouraging students and recognizing their efforts, instead of only looking at scores.

6.3. Create Safe Spaces in Schools for Sharing

Students need safe and quiet spaces where they can take a break, breathe, and even speak openly if they want to. Schools can create small rooms or corners where students can relax or speak to a trusted adult or peer if they feel stressed.

6.4. Add Mental Health and Life Skills Classe.

Apart from academic subjects, students should also be taught how to manage stress, balance time, and cope with pressure. Short classes or workshops on mindfulness, time management, emotional well-being, and confidence-building can help students face challenges in a healthier way.

6.5. Give Students Time for Hobbies and Interest.

Many students shared how they had to stop doing things they loved, like dancing, painting, or playing sports, because of exams. Schools and families should make sure students have enough time and support to enjoy their hobbies. This helps them stay happy and feel more balanced.

6.6. Stop the Habit of Constant Comparison

Comparing one student to another can lower confidence and self-esteem. Every student is different and has their own pace of learning. It's important to encourage them to do their best for themselves, not to beat someone else.

6.7. Reduce Pressure by Making Studies More Flexible

Giving students more time for assignments, spreading out exams, or reducing unnecessary homework can help ease stress. Making learning more fun and practical instead of only competitive can create a better school experience.

6.8. Encourage Open Conversations

Students should be encouraged to talk about their feelings and struggles without fear of being judged. Schools and families can create an open environment where students feel comfortable sharing their worries, thoughts, and goals.

6.9 School should appoint qualified social workers

School social workers play a vital role in identifying students who experience academic stress, emotional difficulties, or familial pressures. They offer a secure and impartial space for students to express themselves openly. By providing counselling, conducting regular meetings, and facilitating stress management workshops, school social workers can reduce anxiety, boost self-esteem, and improve the overall well-being of students. Additionally, they act as a bridge between the school, families, and external mental health services, delivering essential support to students. Over time, the presence of social workers can contribute to a healthier, more empathetic, and well-rounded educational environment.

These small yet powerful changes can help students feel more supported, understood, and emotionally strong. When students are treated with kindness and care, they can grow not just academically, but also as confident, balanced, and happy individuals.

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APPENDIX

I, Rajashree Hazarika, a student of the Social Work Department, Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankaradeva Vishwavidyalaya, Guwahati Unit, assure that the following interview schedule was used solely for the purpose of my dissertation titled "Impact of Academic Stress on High School Students", under the supervision. Arpita Das, Assistant Professor, Department of Social Work, MSSV, Guwahati Unit.

The interviews were conducted with 15 respondents, all Class 10 students, residing in Jonakpur area of Guwahati, Assam. Each interview lasted for approximately 30 minutes. I confirm that the responses collected have been kept confidential and used strictly for academic purposes. I am grateful to all the participants for their valuable time and input in helping me understand the impact of academic stress from their perspectives.

Rajashree Hazarika

MSW 4th Semester

Roll No: Msw-10/23

Department of Social Work

MSSV, Guwahati Unit

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Demographic Information

NAME:

AGE:

SEX:

1. Does your family expect you to get high marks?
2. Do you feel pressure to get high marks because of what people expect from you?
3. Do your parents compare your results with others?
4. Do you ever feel like giving up due to study pressure?
5. What kind of thoughts come to your mind during high-pressure situations?
6. Do you face difficulties balancing studies and other activities?
7. Are you distracted by phones or games during studies?
8. What changes should schools make to reduce stress?
9. How do you plan your study schedule? Do you plan your study to relieve stress?
10. Do you feel pressure from teachers or school rules?
11. How does academic stress affect your mood?
12. Do you think academic pressure leads to depression?
13. How does school stress affect your sleep?
14. Have you ever felt sad or low because of your studies?
15. Do you feel mentally exhausted even after sleeping?
16. Do you feel demotivated due to academic stress?
17. What emotions do you feel when exams are near?
18. Have you ever thought about giving up on your goals because of stress?
19. Where does the stress lead you—mentally or emotionally?

20. Do you feel safe discussing stress with school staff?
21. Do you use any techniques like breathing or meditation?
22. Are your coping methods helpful in managing stress?
23. Do you take breaks while studying? If yes, what do you do during these breaks?
24. How do you manage your daily study workload?
25. How do you balance your studies with extracurricular activities?
26. Do you find school counseling helpful?
27. What is the most important thing you've learned about dealing with stress?
28. What helps you calm down when you're stressed about exams?
29. Do you talk to friends or family when you feel stressed?
30. Do you try to stay organized to avoid last-minute pressure?