

## **“Minimising Academic Stress among Senior Secondary Students in the light of NEP 2020”**

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### **Abstract**

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 marks a transformative shift in India's educational landscape, emphasizing holistic, flexible, and student-cantered learning. This paper explores strategies to minimize academic stress among senior secondary school students within the framework of NEP 2020. Academic stress, a prevalent issue with significant implications for students' mental health and academic performance, is addressed through the NEP's innovative approaches.

The policy's focus on a multidisciplinary curriculum, continuous and comprehensive evaluation, and holistic development that provide opportunities to reduce the stress traditionally associated with senior secondary education. Key strategies include offering flexible subject choices, reforming assessment methods to focus on core competencies, integrating mental health support and well-being programs, and reducing the curriculum load to prioritize essential learning outcomes. Additionally, fostering a supportive school environment, enhancing parental involvement, and providing continuous professional development for educators are essential components.

This paper also emphasizes the importance of creating feedback mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies in real-time, ensuring continuous improvement. By aligning educational practices with NEP 2020's vision, schools can create an environment that not only reduces academic stress but also promotes the overall well-being and holistic development of students.

**Keywords :** *Academic Stress, Senior Secondary Education, NEP 2020, Holistic Development, Multidisciplinary Curriculum, Continuous Assessment, Mental Health, Educational Reform, India.*

## Introduction

Adolescence is a critical developmental period characterized by significant physical, emotional, cognitive, and social changes. During this time, education plays a pivotal role in shaping the future of young individuals, influencing their personal development, academic achievements, and career paths. Understanding the unique needs and challenges faced by adolescents in the educational context is essential for creating supportive learning environments that foster growth and development. The educational journey during adolescence is shaped by essential developmental characteristics and poses unique challenges and opportunities:

Academic stress is a prevalent issue among senior secondary students, often manifesting in various physical and psychological symptoms that can hinder their overall well-being and academic performance. This stress is frequently driven by the intense pressure to perform well in exams, meet high parental and societal expectations, and secure a promising future. The introduction of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 in India aims to address these challenges by overhauling the educational system to make it more holistic, enjoyable, and less burdensome. Academic stress in senior secondary students is multifaceted, stemming from a combination of academic workload, fear of failure, and the high-stakes nature of board examinations and competitive entrance tests. This stress can lead to various negative outcomes, including anxiety, depression, burnout, and even a decrease in academic achievement. It is crucial to explore strategies and policies that can help mitigate this stress to promote a healthier and more conducive learning environment. Academic stress can stem from various factors related to the educational environment and the expectations placed on students.

## Objectives of the Study

The primary objectives of this study are to:

1. Access the sources of academic stress among senior secondary students.
2. Evaluate the potential impact of NEP 2020 on reducing academic stress.

3. Identify the effective strategies and recommendations that align with NEP 2020 to mitigate stress among students.

**Research Methodology:** A combination of qualitative and descriptive research methods is used. The secondary data was gathered from a number of online and offline sources, including journals, websites, papers, and other publications. It also considers the extraction of summaries from different materials pertaining to educational policies.

### Significance of the study

Understanding and addressing academic stress is essential for fostering a supportive educational environment that promotes the overall development of students. By aligning with the principles of NEP 2020, this study aims to contribute to the creation of a more balanced, inclusive, and stress-free educational experience for senior secondary students in India. This research will provide valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and stakeholders in the education sector to implement effective stress-reduction strategies and support the holistic development of students.

### Sources of Academic Stress

The Indian education system, like many others globally, faces challenges related to academic stress among senior secondary students. Academic stress among senior secondary students can be influenced by a variety of factors, including:

- **Pressure to Perform:** Expectations from parents, teachers, and society to excel academically can create significant stress. This pressure may come from a desire to secure admission to prestigious colleges or universities.
- **Heavy Workload:** Balancing multiple subjects, assignments, projects, and exams can lead to feelings of overwhelm and stress, especially if students feel they have inadequate time to complete tasks to a satisfactory level.
- **Competitive Environment:** In environments where academic success is highly competitive, students may experience stress related to comparisons with their peers, fear of failure, and a constant need to outperform others.

- **High-Stakes Exams:** Exams such as college entrance exams or standardized tests can amplify stress due to their significant impact on future academic and career prospects.
- **Lack of Time Management Skills:** Difficulty in managing time effectively to balance academic responsibilities with extracurricular activities, social life, and personal interests can contribute to stress.
- **Perceived Lack of Support:** Feeling unsupported by teachers, parents, or peers can exacerbate stress levels. This lack of support may manifest as a lack of guidance, understanding, or encouragement.
- **Fear of Disappointing Others:** Students may fear disappointing their parents, teachers, or themselves if they do not meet academic expectations, leading to increased stress and anxiety.
- **Perfectionism:** Striving for perfection in academic performance can lead to excessive stress, as students may set unrealistic standards for themselves and feel constant pressure to meet or exceed them.
- **Poor Coping Mechanisms:** Inadequate coping strategies for managing stress, such as avoidance, substance use, or unhealthy lifestyle habits, can exacerbate the negative effects of academic stress.
- **Personal Issues:** External factors such as family problems, financial difficulties, health issues, or social pressures can spill over into academic life and contribute to heightened stress levels.

### **Minimizing Academic Stress in the light of NEP 2020:**

Addressing academic stress among senior secondary students in the context of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 involves a multi-faceted approach that encompasses various aspects of education, mental health, and support systems. Here's how the NEP 2020 can guide efforts to mitigate academic stress:

- **Holistic and Multidisciplinary Education:** NEP 2020 emphasizes a shift from rote learning to a more holistic and multidisciplinary approach. This means students are encouraged to explore various subjects and disciplines, rather than focusing solely on

exam-oriented studies. This approach can alleviate stress by allowing students to pursue their interests and talents, thus reducing the pressure to excel in a narrow set of subjects.

- **Flexible Curriculum and Assessment:** The policy advocates for a flexible curriculum and assessment system, including the introduction of competency-based learning. This move reduces the emphasis on high-stakes exams and encourages continuous assessment based on a student's overall performance and understanding. With less reliance on a single exam determining a student's future, there's likely to be a decrease in stress related to exam performance.
- **Emphasis on Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving:** NEP 2020 aims to foster critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills among students. By focusing on developing these skills rather than memorization, students are empowered to approach challenges with confidence, reducing anxiety associated with academic performance.
- **Reduced Academic Burden:** The policy recommends rationalizing curriculum content to reduce the academic burden on students. By streamlining syllabi and eliminating redundant topics, students can focus on mastering core concepts rather than feeling overwhelmed by excessive coursework.
- **Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE):** NEP 2020 emphasizes the importance of early childhood care and education, recognizing the formative years as crucial for holistic development. By providing a strong foundation during the early years, children are better equipped to handle academic challenges later on, potentially reducing stress in higher grades.
- **Counselling and Support Services:** The policy highlights the importance of mental health and well-being in educational institutions. It suggests the establishment of counselling and support services to address the psychological needs of students. By providing access to mental health resources, students can better cope with academic stress and seek help when needed.
- **Flexibility in Choice of Subjects and Careers:** NEP 2020 promotes flexibility in the choice of subjects and careers, allowing students to pursue their passions and interests.



This flexibility can alleviate stress by reducing the pressure to conform to traditional career paths and expectations, empowering students to explore diverse opportunities.

- **Parental Engagement:** NEP 2020 encourages active involvement of parents in their children's education. Schools can organize workshops and seminars to educate parents about the importance of fostering a supportive and nurturing environment at home, one that prioritizes overall well-being over academic performance alone.
- **Skill Development :** The policy emphasizes the integration of vocational education and skill development into the curriculum from an early age. Providing students with opportunities to develop practical skills alongside academic learning can enhance their confidence and reduce stress by offering alternative pathways to success beyond traditional academic achievements.
- **Technology Integration:** NEP 2020 advocates for the use of technology in education. Schools can leverage educational technology tools to personalize learning experiences, provide additional support to students who may be struggling academically, and offer flexible learning options that accommodate diverse learning styles, thereby reducing stress associated with one-size-fits-all teaching methods.

By aligning efforts with the principles outlined in NEP 2020, educators, policymakers, and stakeholders can work together to create a more nurturing and supportive educational environment that prioritizes the overall well-being of senior secondary students, thereby alleviating academic stress and fostering holistic development. Overall, NEP 2020 has the potential to create a more conducive learning environment that prioritizes the holistic development and well-being of students, thereby mitigating the factors contributing to academic stress. However, successful implementation will require concerted efforts from educational institutions, policymakers, teachers, parents, and students alike.

### **Suggestions and Recommendations**

Minimizing academic stress among senior secondary students is crucial for their overall well-being and academic success. Here are some suggestions and recommendations:

- **Establish a Supportive Environment:** Create a supportive and nurturing environment both at school and at home. Encourage open communication between students, teachers, and parents to address any concerns or issues promptly.
- **Promote Time Management Skills:** Teach students effective time management techniques, such as creating study schedules, prioritizing tasks, and breaking down larger tasks into smaller, more manageable ones. Time management can help students avoid last-minute cramming and reduce stress.
- **Encourage a Balanced Lifestyle:** Emphasize the importance of maintaining a balanced lifestyle that includes regular exercise, sufficient sleep, and healthy nutrition. Physical activity and adequate rest can help reduce stress levels and improve concentration.
- **Teach Stress Management Techniques:** Educate students about stress management techniques such as deep breathing exercises, mindfulness meditation, and progressive muscle relaxation. These techniques can help students relax and stay calm during stressful situations.
- **Foster a Growth Mindset:** Encourage a growth mindset where students understand that intelligence and abilities can be developed through effort and perseverance. Teach them to view challenges as opportunities for growth rather than obstacles to be feared.
- **Provide Academic Support:** Offer academic support services such as tutoring, study groups, and extra help sessions for students who may be struggling academically. Providing additional resources can help students feel more confident and competent in their academic abilities.
- **Promote Self-Care Practices:** Encourage students to engage in self-care practices such as hobbies, creative outlets, and spending time with friends and family. Taking breaks and engaging in activities they enjoy can help students recharge and prevent burnout.
- **Reduce Performance Pressure:** Avoid placing excessive pressure on students to achieve certain academic outcomes. Instead, focus on their individual progress and growth, celebrating their efforts and achievements along the way.

- **Cultivate a Positive School Culture:** Foster a positive school culture where students feel valued, supported, and included. Promote kindness, empathy, and respect among students and staff members.
- **Address Test Anxiety:** Provide strategies for managing test anxiety, such as relaxation techniques, positive self-talk, and practicing test-taking skills. Creating a low-stress testing environment can also help alleviate anxiety for students.

By implementing these suggestions and recommendations, schools can help minimize academic stress among senior secondary students and create a more supportive and conducive learning environment.

## Conclusion

By promoting experiential learning, critical thinking, and creativity, the NEP aims to foster a conducive learning environment where students can explore their interests and talents without the fear of failure. Additionally, the policy's focus on student well-being, including mental health support and stress management programs, is instrumental in ensuring that students receive the necessary assistance to cope with academic challenges. However, the successful implementation of NEP 2020 requires collaborative efforts from various stakeholders, including policymakers, educators, parents, and students themselves. It's imperative to prioritize teacher training, infrastructural development, and effective communication to ensure that the objectives of the policy are met.

Overall, the NEP 2020 provides a promising roadmap for minimizing academic stress among senior secondary students by promoting a more holistic and inclusive approach to education. However, its effectiveness will depend on the commitment and concerted actions of all involved parties to create a supportive and nurturing learning environment for students.

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