



# Mental Stress Among School-Going Children- A Review

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## ARTICLE INFO

## ABSTRACT

Stress is a common problem that affects almost every individual at some point in his/her life. It is emotional and physical strain caused by our response to pressure from the outside world. Mental stress among school-going children is a growing concern, with significant implications for their academic performance, emotional well-being, and overall development. This review explores the various sources of stress that children face, the impact of stress on their mental and physical health, and potential strategies for managing and mitigating stress in this population. By understanding these factors, educators, parents, and mental health professionals can better support children in navigating the challenges of school life.

## Introduction

Stress can be described as a circumstance that disturbs, or is likely to disturb the normal psychological or physiological functioning of a person. Mental stress among school-going children is an increasingly recognized issue, with implications for academic performance, social relationships, and long-term psychological well-being. The transition through school years, marked by academic demands, peer pressure, and developmental changes, often contributes to significant stress levels in children and adolescents. Firstborn children appear to be more achievement oriented and motivated to please their parents than subsequent children born to same parent. This review aims to explore the sources, prevalence, and effects of mental stress on school-going children and to highlight potential strategies for management and prevention.

## Sources of Mental Stress

Several factors contribute to mental stress among school-going children. Academic pressure is often cited as the primary source of stress, driven by high expectations from parents, teachers, and the children themselves (1). Additionally, extracurricular activities, while beneficial for personal development, can add to the burden when they lead to over-scheduling and fatigue (2).

Social stressors, such as peer pressure, bullying, and the need to fit in, also play a crucial role in the mental health of children (3). With the rise of social media, the pressure to maintain a certain image has further exacerbated stress levels among students (4). Family dynamics, including parental conflict, financial instability, and high parental expectations, are other significant contributors to stress (5).

## Prevalence of Mental Stress

Research indicates that a substantial proportion of school-going children experience significant levels of stress. A study conducted in the United States found that nearly 49% of high school students reported feeling a great deal of stress on a daily basis (6). Similarly, studies in other parts of the world, including Europe and Asia, have reported comparable prevalence rates, indicating that mental stress among school-going children is a global issue (7,8).

### Effects of Mental Stress

The effects of mental stress on children are profound and far-reaching. Chronic stress can lead to a range of psychological issues, including anxiety, depression, and burnout (9). It also affects physical health, contributing to problems such as headaches, sleep disturbances and gastrointestinal issues (10). Furthermore, stress can impair cognitive functions, leading to difficulties in concentration, memory, and decision-making, ultimately affecting academic performance (11).

In addition to the direct impact on mental and physical health, stress can lead to negative behaviors such as substance abuse, aggression, and social withdrawal (12). These behaviors can further complicate a child's ability to cope with stress, poor self esteem, creating a vicious cycle that is difficult to break. In severe form often displays pervasive anhedonia, severe psychomotor retardation, delusions, sense of hopelessness, Suicidal ideation, depressed or irritable mood, insomnia(13).

### Management and Prevention

Addressing mental stress among school-going children requires a multi-faceted approach involving parents, teachers, and healthcare professionals. Schools can play a critical role by incorporating stress management programs into their curriculum, teaching children coping mechanisms such as time management, relaxation techniques, and problem-solving skills (14).

Parents are also vital in mitigating stress by maintaining open communication with their children, providing emotional support, and setting realistic expectations (15). Additionally, access to mental health services, including counselling and psychological support, is essential for children who struggle with stress (16).

### Psychosocial Interventions:

**CBT-** Aims to challenge maladaptive beliefs and enhance problem solving ability and social competence.

**IPT-** Focuses on improving stress through a focus on which stress interfares with interpersonal relationships and overcoming those challenges.

**PCIT-ED-** (Parent child interaction therapy-emotion development)

### Challenges and Future Directions

While there has been progress in addressing mental stress among school-going children, challenges remain. These include:

- **Stigma:** Mental health stigma may prevent children and parents from seeking help.
- **Limited Resources:** Schools may lack the resources to provide adequate mental health support.
- **Cultural Barriers:** Different cultural attitudes toward stress and mental health can influence how stress is perceived and managed.

### Future research and policy efforts should focus on:

- **Expanding Access to Mental Health Services:** Increasing the availability of school-based mental health services and resources.
- **Enhancing Teacher Training:** Providing teachers with training to recognize and address stress in students.

**Promoting Mental Health Awareness:** Implementing widespread campaigns to reduce stigma and encourage early intervention.

### Conclusion

Mental stress among school-going children is a pervasive issue with significant implications for their overall development and well-being. Early identification and intervention are key to preventing the long-term adverse effects of stress. By fostering supportive environments at home and school, and providing children with the necessary tools to manage stress, we can help them navigate the challenges of their school years more effectively.

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