

# *Study on the relationship between academic stress and mental health in primary school students*

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**Abstract:** The research on the relationship between academic stress and psychological health of primary school students aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the impact of academic stress on the psychological health of primary school students. Through surveys and analysis of a certain number of primary school students, the study found a certain correlation between academic stress and psychological health. This paper provides a detailed analysis of the sources of academic stress and the psychological health status of primary school students through methods such as questionnaire surveys and psychological measurements, offering valuable references for students, parents, and educational institutions.

## **1. Introduction**

The primary school stage is a crucial period in students' lives, where academic stress and psychological health are particularly significant. With the development of society and the improvement of educational levels, the academic stress of primary school students has gradually attracted attention. However, the specific impact of academic stress on the psychological health of primary school students still requires further research and exploration. This paper aims to reveal the relationship between academic stress and psychological health of primary school students through systematic investigation and analysis, providing a basis for formulating more effective educational policies and offering scientifically guided psychological health support.

## **2. Academic Stress Sources**

### **2.1. Definition and Classification of Academic Stress**

Academic stress is a prevalent physiological and psychological tension experienced by primary school students during the learning process. This stress arises from various factors, primarily including academic tasks, exam pressure, and academic requirements. Academic stress originates externally from the expectations of schools, teachers, and parents, as well as internally from individual expectations regarding their academic performance. In terms of external pressure, academic stress manifests as an increasing workload, heightened exam pressure, and societal evaluation. These factors collectively create a sense of urgency and anxiety for primary school students during their learning process. Internal pressure is characterized by doubts about individual

academic abilities, a desire for success, and fear of failure. When facing academic requirements, individuals may question their own capabilities, and the desire for success and fear of failure can impact the perception of academic stress.

Additionally, academic stress can be subdivided into cognitive stress, emotional stress, and behavioral stress. Cognitive stress involves tension related to understanding, applying, and expanding knowledge, where students may feel cognitive strain when confronted with the complexity of subject matter. Emotional stress encompasses the emotional fluctuations experienced by students during academics, such as anxiety, excitement, and discouragement. Behavioral stress involves the efforts and challenges students face in completing academic tasks, including challenges in time management and task completion. [1]

In summary, the complexity of academic stress is evident in the interplay of external and internal factors and its multidimensional manifestation in cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions. A profound understanding of these aspects contributes to a better comprehension of the challenges primary school students face in academics, enabling the formulation of more effective support strategies.

## **2.2. Main Sources of Academic Stress for Primary School Students**

The primary sources of academic stress for primary school students encompass the educational system, curriculum, family expectations and support, as well as peer relationships and societal evaluation.

Firstly, the educational system and curriculum directly influence the level of academic stress for primary school students. As subject knowledge deepens, students are challenged by increasingly complex academic content, posing a challenge to their academic stress. Moreover, the examination system and assessment mechanisms of schools also shape the perception of academic stress for primary school students.

Secondly, expectations and pressures from families are crucial sources of academic stress for primary school students. Parents' high expectations for their children's academic performance translate into academic stress for primary school students. Family expectations and support significantly shape the attitudes and motivation of primary school students towards academics, playing a crucial role in their academic development.

Thirdly, peer relationships and societal evaluation also impact the academic stress experienced by primary school students. Factors such as competition among classmates and societal expectations, especially those regarding outstanding academic performance, can psychologically burden primary school students. Societal expectations and evaluations, particularly those placed on students with excellent academic performance, may intensify their academic burdens. [2]

In summary, academic stress for primary school students results from the interplay of multiple factors, including schools, families, and society. Understanding these main sources helps to comprehensively grasp the mechanisms behind academic stress for primary school students, providing a robust basis for implementing corresponding support measures.

## **2.3. Academic Stress and Individual Differences**

Academic stress exhibits notable individual differences among primary school students, evident in personality traits, subject preferences, and self-esteem levels.

Firstly, students with extroverted and adaptable personalities may find it easier to confront academic stress, displaying better adaptability and resilience. Conversely, introverted and anxious students may demonstrate greater sensitivity to academic stress.

Secondly, subject preferences have a significant impact on academic stress. Students interested in

certain subjects may enjoy the learning process, experiencing relatively lighter academic stress. On the other hand, students harboring aversions to certain subjects may feel a heavier academic burden due to a lack of enthusiasm and interest in those subjects. [3]

Furthermore, an individual's level of self-esteem directly influences the perception of academic stress. Students with higher self-esteem are generally more confident in facing academic challenges and exhibit more positive coping strategies for academic stress. Conversely, students with lower self-esteem are more likely to feel helpless and discouraged under academic stress, displaying poorer adaptive capabilities to challenges.

In conclusion, gaining an in-depth understanding of students' individual differences, such as personality, subject preferences, and self-esteem, facilitates the development of personalized strategies to alleviate academic stress, offering more targeted psychological support for students.

### **3. Impact of Academic Stress on Mental Health**

#### **3.1. Research on the Relationship between Academic Stress and Anxiety**

There exists a close relationship between academic stress and anxiety, particularly evident in the primary school student population.

Firstly, academic stress often serves as a primary trigger for anxiety. Primary school students, faced with the deepening of subject knowledge and an increasing workload, frequently experience pressure. This pressure may stem from anxiety about exam scores, teacher expectations, and future academic advancement. Especially on the eve of exams, students may feel nervous and fearful, with this tension evolving into a state of anxiety. [4]

Secondly, anxiety can have a negative impact on academic performance. Anxiety can lead to a lack of concentration, confused thinking, making it challenging for students to effectively complete academic tasks. Moreover, anxiety may induce sleep problems, affecting students' physiological health and learning efficiency. This negative impact forms a vicious cycle, exacerbating students' academic stress and making them more susceptible to negative emotional states. To assist primary school students in coping better with academic stress and anxiety, it is recommended for students to cultivate effective emotional regulation strategies. This includes relaxation training, relieving tension through methods such as deep breathing and meditation; time management, helping students effectively schedule study and rest times; positive self-dialogue, encouraging students to adopt positive academic perspectives and maintaining an optimistic attitude in the face of challenges.

In addition to individual interventions, schools and families play crucial roles. Schools can provide psychological counseling services, offering students professional psychological support and guidance. Simultaneously, creating a relaxed learning atmosphere, alleviating excessive academic stress, and providing students with more enjoyable learning experiences are beneficial. Families are vital in cultivating emotional health in students, providing understanding and support, helping children develop correct academic perspectives, and collectively facing academic challenges. Through comprehensive interventions at the individual, school, and family levels, it is possible to more comprehensively alleviate primary school students' academic stress and anxiety, promoting their healthy psychological development. [5]

#### **3.2. The Association between Academic Stress and Depression**

There is a close association between academic stress and depression, especially within the primary school student population. This association manifests as academic stress potentially triggering depressive emotions, while depressive states may further intensify academic stress, forming a vicious cycle. Therefore, in helping primary school students cope with academic stress and depression, both

schools and families play crucial roles. [6]

Firstly, academic stress may act as a trigger for depressive emotions. In a competitive academic environment, primary school students may feel significant pressure from schools, families, and peers. This pressure may stem from increased subject knowledge, exam stress, and anxiety about the future. Students who perceive academic inadequacy may experience feelings of inferiority and discouragement, which may gradually evolve into a state of depression. Therefore, academic stress plays a triggering role in the occurrence of depressive emotions.

Secondly, depressive states may further intensify academic stress. Depression can lead students to lose interest and motivation in academics, reducing their enthusiasm and efficiency in learning. Students in a state of depression may lose confidence in school life, develop negative expectations for the future, and consequently generate negative academic stress. This negative cycle may lead students into deep academic difficulties, impacting their academic performance and mental health. To help primary school students cope with academic stress and depression, schools can conduct mental health education programs, guide students in correctly understanding academic stress, and enhance their resilience to stress. Establishing a psychological counseling service system to provide professional psychological support and guidance to students helps detect and alleviate signs of depression promptly.

Additionally, schools can create a relaxed learning atmosphere, alleviate academic stress, and provide students with more enjoyable learning experiences. Families play a crucial role in attending to children's academic situations and emotional health. Establishing a supportive and understanding family atmosphere, encouraging children to express their emotions, and promptly identifying and alleviating signs of depression are essential. Parental care and support are critical for children's mental health.

In conclusion, the association between academic stress and depression requires joint attention from schools and families. By providing comprehensive mental health support and education, it is possible to help primary school students better cope with academic challenges, prevent and alleviate depressive emotions, and promote their holistic and positive growth.

### **3.3. The Impact of Academic Stress on Self-Esteem**

There exists a complex and reciprocal relationship between academic stress and self-esteem, exerting profound effects on the mental health of primary school students.

Firstly, academic stress may have a negative impact on self-esteem. When faced with academic challenges and difficulties, primary school students may experience a decrease in self-worth, giving rise to feelings of inferiority and doubts about their own abilities. Particularly in comparison with peers, unsatisfactory academic performance may exacerbate the damage to self-esteem. Primary school students typically face an increasing amount of subject knowledge and academic tasks, which may lead to increased academic stress for some students. For those encountering challenges in academics, they may feel helpless and discouraged in the face of academic stress, affecting the formation and development of their self-esteem. In a highly competitive school environment, students often evaluate their worth based on academic achievements, and this evaluation may directly negatively impact self-esteem.

Secondly, the level of self-esteem may regulate the perception of academic stress. Students with higher self-esteem may have more confidence in facing academic challenges and are better equipped to handle academic stress. Conversely, students with lower self-esteem may find themselves more easily feeling discouraged and helpless under academic stress. Therefore, understanding students' levels of self-esteem helps in formulating personalized mental health support plans, aiding them in better coping with academic stress. In the cultivation of primary school students' self-esteem and

coping with academic stress, both schools and families play crucial roles. Schools can organize personalized educational activities, encourage students to participate in diverse subjects and extracurricular activities, and enhance their self-awareness and self-esteem levels.

Additionally, through mental health education programs, schools can help students understand the impact of academic stress on self-esteem and provide effective coping strategies. Families should be supporters of their children's mental health. By establishing positive communication with children, understanding their feelings in academics, paying attention to their needs and achievements, parents can create a supportive family atmosphere. Family support and encouragement are essential for instilling positive academic perspectives and fostering healthy self-esteem in children. In a holistic perspective, a profound understanding of these interactive relationships in the research on the association between academic stress and mental health contributes to providing more comprehensive and targeted mental health support for primary school students, facilitating their well-rounded and positive development.

## **4. Strategies for Promoting and Intervening in Mental Health**

### **4.1. Cultivation and Enhancement of Mental Health**

The cultivation and enhancement of mental health are crucial for the holistic development of primary school students. Through collaborative efforts between schools and families, the cultivation and enhancement of mental health can be promoted through the following aspects.

Firstly, students need to learn to cultivate a positive mindset and emotional management skills. Schools can convey positive ways of expressing emotions to students through mental health education courses, teaching them to maintain an optimistic attitude when facing challenges. Emotional management training enables students to better understand, express, and cope with emotions, alleviating anxiety and depressive emotions caused by academic stress.

Secondly, the roles of schools and families are vital. Creating a positive learning atmosphere together, encouraging students to explore, experiment, and accept failures are essential. Schools should encourage innovative thinking, advocate for diverse academic interests, allowing students to find enjoyment and motivation in their studies. By providing a supportive learning environment, students can more easily develop optimistic and positive academic attitudes.

Additionally, the cultivation of cognitive abilities is key to enhancing mental health. Schools can employ cognitive-behavioral therapy to help students establish positive academic perspectives and foster positive coping strategies for challenges. Through the improvement of cognitive skills, students can better understand and address difficulties in academics, reducing mental health issues triggered by negative thinking.

In the cultivation and enhancement of mental health, schools and families should collaborate closely to form an effective educational support system. Through joint efforts, providing comprehensive mental health education for primary school students, cultivating positive emotional attitudes, and enhancing cognitive abilities can help them better face academic challenges and achieve holistic development.

### **4.2. The Role of School Mental Health Education**

Schools play a critical role in mental health education, and through various measures, they can effectively promote the comprehensive development of students' mental health.

Firstly, schools can establish mental health education courses to systematically convey mental health knowledge to students, helping them gain a more comprehensive understanding of academic stress. This curriculum includes not only training in emotional management but also covers topics

such as coping with setbacks and cultivating a positive mindset. Through education, students can build healthy mental concepts and learn to effectively handle the pressures of academics.

Secondly, schools can provide professional psychological support to students through psychological counseling services. Establishing a mental health service center equipped with professional psychologists and counselors can promptly identify and intervene in students' mental health issues. Personalized psychological counseling and guidance help students better understand their emotional states, enhance psychological resilience, and effectively face academic challenges.

Furthermore, schools emphasize the organic integration of mental health education with academic education. Integrating mental health education into various academic curricula not only increases students' awareness of mental health but also inspires mental health within subject learning. For example, in Chinese language classes, analyzing emotional expressions in literary works can guide students to understand the complexity of emotions, cultivating their emotional management skills.

In addition, schools can create a campus atmosphere that emphasizes mental health through activities such as keynote speeches and mental health weeks. Inviting professional psychologists or mental health experts to conduct lectures, sharing experiences in managing psychological stress related to academics, provides students with direct guidance on mental health. Through these activities, schools can stimulate students' attention and appreciation for mental health, helping them form positive psychological values.

In summary, the role of schools in mental health education goes beyond being knowledge transmitters; they serve as guides and supporters of mental health. Through comprehensive mental health education initiatives, schools can help students better understand and cope with academic stress, fostering individuals with greater psychological resilience.

### **4.3. The Role of Family Support in Mental Health**

Family plays an indispensable and crucial role in the cultivation of students' mental health. Family support has profound effects on alleviating academic stress and promoting the formation of mental health. Here are several aspects in which families play a role in the mental health of primary school students.

Firstly, positive family communication and active listening are crucial for understanding a child's struggles and stress in academics. Establishing a strong parent-child relationship makes children feel safe and trusted at home, enabling them to express their true emotions without reservation. Through communication, parents can better understand their children's needs, identify potential psychological issues promptly, and provide targeted support.

Secondly, families should encourage children to develop the right attitudes toward academics. Through positive words and actions, parents can guide children to form positive attitudes toward academics. Parental attitudes have a profound impact on children's academic perspectives; therefore, a positive family atmosphere helps children develop positive mindsets when facing academic stress, enabling them to face challenges with resilience.

Additionally, family support includes paying attention to children's emotional and psychological needs. Understanding children's personalities, emphasizing the cultivation of their interests and hobbies, and providing a warm and harmonious family atmosphere contribute to enhancing children's psychological resilience. By establishing a secure family environment, children can better adapt to academic stress and develop the ability to cope with pressure.

Moreover, parental involvement in a child's academics is crucial. Being concerned about a child's academic progress, jointly creating study plans, providing assistance and guidance in academics contribute to establishing a positive academic atmosphere. Homework time can become a moment for parent-child interaction, strengthening family cohesion and alleviating academic stress.

In conclusion, as an essential component of students' lives, families play an irreplaceable role in the cultivation of mental health. Positive family support helps children better cope with academic challenges, fostering individuals with psychological resilience. Through the joint efforts of families and schools, it is possible to provide more comprehensive mental health support for primary school students, promoting their healthy growth.

## 5. Conclusion

Through an in-depth exploration of the relationship between academic stress and mental health in primary school students, this study has found a significant connection between academic stress and mental well-being. The alleviation of academic stress and the promotion of mental health require collective efforts from the entire society, including support and attention from schools, families, and the community. It is recommended to formulate more scientifically rational educational policies and implement targeted mental health education to enhance the overall quality and happiness of primary school students.

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