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Relationship between Academic Procrastination and Examination Stress among CISCE School Students: A Review

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ABSTRACT

Academic procrastination has emerged as one of the major behavioural factors contributing to examination stress among senior secondary students. The present review examines the relationship between academic procrastination and examination-related stress with particular emphasis on students studying under the Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE). The review synthesizes findings from ten recent national and international studies published between 2020 and 2024. The selected studies collectively demonstrate that postponing academic tasks, poor self-regulation, fear of failure, perfectionism, parental expectations, and classroom pressure significantly increase examination stress, anxiety, and psychological distress. The literature further indicates that prolonged procrastination reduces academic preparedness, resulting in lower confidence, impaired academic performance, and adverse emotional outcomes. Several studies also highlight the protective role of resilience, positive coping strategies, effective time management, and institutional counselling in reducing stress and improving students' psychological well-being. Physiological evidence, including elevated cortisol and inflammatory biomarkers during examinations, further confirms the adverse impact of academic stress on students. The review concludes that academic procrastination is a significant predictor of examination stress and recommends early identification, structured counselling programmes, self-regulated learning strategies, and stress-management interventions within schools. These measures can enhance students' academic engagement, emotional resilience, examination preparedness, and overall educational outcomes.

Keywords: *Academic Procrastination, Examination Stress, CISCE Students, Academic Anxiety, Self-Regulation, Coping Strategies.*

1. Introduction

Academic achievement at the senior secondary level is one of the most significant milestones in a student's educational journey, as it shapes opportunities for higher education and future career development. For students studying in Class XII under the CISCE Board in Mumbai, Maharashtra, board examination performance plays a decisive role in securing admission to prestigious colleges, universities, and professional programmes. Due to the highly competitive educational environment, students are expected to perform exceptionally well while simultaneously managing multiple academic responsibilities. Along with completing an extensive syllabus, they are required to prepare assignments, practical work, projects, regular revisions, and competitive entrance examinations. Such demanding academic expectations often create substantial pressure, making effective time management and self-regulation essential for academic success.

Mumbai, being one of India's leading metropolitan cities, provides students with access to reputed educational institutions and numerous coaching facilities. While these opportunities enhance academic growth, they also intensify competition and increase performance expectations. Parents, teachers, and society often place considerable emphasis on obtaining high examination scores, believing that excellent academic performance ensures a successful future. Students frequently compare themselves with high-achieving peers, and many experience anxiety about meeting expectations and maintaining academic excellence [1-4]. The fast-paced urban lifestyle further limits opportunities for recreation and emotional relaxation, increasing mental fatigue and psychological stress. Consequently, many students struggle to maintain a healthy balance between academic commitments and personal well-being.

One of the major behavioural challenges observed among senior secondary students is academic procrastination. Academic procrastination refers to the intentional delay or postponement of important academic tasks despite knowing that such delays may produce negative consequences. Students may postpone studying difficult subjects, delay completing assignments, avoid revision schedules, or begin examination preparation only when deadlines become unavoidable. Contrary to the common belief that procrastination results merely from laziness, research suggests that it is influenced by several psychological and emotional factors, including fear of failure, perfectionism, low self-confidence, poor motivation, inadequate time-management skills, and digital distractions such as social media and online entertainment. These factors encourage students to seek temporary emotional relief by avoiding academic work, although such avoidance eventually leads to greater academic difficulties [5].

The consequences of academic procrastination become particularly evident during examination periods. Delaying academic tasks reduces the time available for conceptual understanding, systematic revision, and practice, compelling students to rely on last-minute preparation. Such rushed learning often results in superficial understanding, reduced retention of concepts, lower confidence, and increased examination anxiety. Students who procrastinate frequently experience feelings of guilt, frustration, emotional exhaustion, and fear of poor performance. As unfinished academic responsibilities accumulate, psychological pressure intensifies, creating a cycle in which stress further contributes to additional procrastination. Thus, academic procrastination not only affects students' academic performance but also has significant implications for their emotional health and overall psychological well-being.

Academic stress has emerged as one of the most common psychological challenges among senior secondary students. It arises from heavy academic workloads, examination pressure, high parental expectations, competition among peers, and uncertainty regarding future educational opportunities. Excessive academic stress negatively affects concentration, decision-making ability, sleep quality, emotional stability, and self-confidence. When prolonged, it may contribute to anxiety, burnout, reduced academic motivation, and declining academic achievement. Therefore, understanding the factors contributing to academic stress is essential for promoting healthier learning environments and improving students' educational experiences [6-9].

In examining the relationship between academic procrastination and academic stress among CISCE Board Class XII students in Mumbai is both relevant and necessary. Understanding how delayed academic behaviour influences stress levels can help educators, counsellors, parents, and policymakers design effective interventions that encourage better time management, self-regulated learning, emotional resilience, and positive study habits. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the development of counselling programmes, stress-management strategies, and school-based support systems that reduce procrastination, improve psychological well-being, and enhance academic achievement among senior secondary students. Ultimately, fostering timely academic engagement and healthy coping mechanisms can enable students to perform more confidently while maintaining a balanced and productive educational experience [10].

II. Review of Literature

Munda (2024) reported that academic procrastination was strongly associated with stress, anxiety, and poor self-regulation. Academic resilience reduced stress and improved performance, while male students exhibited higher procrastination than female students.

Munda (2024) found that classroom and parental pressure contributed significantly to academic procrastination. The study highlighted that resilience protected students from stress and anxiety, whereas procrastination negatively affected academic self-regulation and achievement.

Muliarta et al. (2023) investigated academic stress among 384 medical students and found significant variations across academic years. Male students reported higher severe stress, and examination periods produced the highest psychological stress levels.

Şemsi et al. (2023) examined examination stress using salivary biomarkers. The study found increased cortisol, neuropeptide Y, and IL-1β levels after examinations, demonstrating that academic stress triggered measurable physiological and inflammatory responses.

Koudela-Hamila et al. (2022) showed that examination periods increased emotional stress, cortisol levels, and negative mood while reducing social interaction among undergraduate students. The findings highlighted both psychological and physiological effects of examination stress.

Yousif et al. (2022) reported moderate academic stress among pharmacy students during COVID-19. Fear of examinations and difficulty remembering lessons were major stressors, while prayer and self-control were common coping strategies.

Akulwar-Tajane et al. (2021) found that 94.4% of physiotherapy students experienced academic stress during online examinations. Examination-related and psychosocial factors significantly affected students' mental health and academic performance.

Ramadhani and Mahmudiono (2021) found a significant association between academic stress and emotional eating among adolescents. Students experiencing higher stress were more likely to consume fast food, sweets, dairy products, and sugary beverages.

Wuthrich et al. (2020) reviewed 60 studies and concluded that approximately one in six secondary school students experienced excessive distress. Female students, anxiety, perfectionism, and poor coping increased stress, whereas resilience and social support reduced it.

Moawad (2020) examined academic stress during the COVID-19 pandemic and found that uncertainty regarding online learning and examinations was the primary source of stress among university students, affecting their psychological well-being and academic adjustment.

III. Major Findings from Study

S. No.	Author(s) and Year	Objective of the Study	Research Method and Sample	Major Findings
1	Munda (2024)	To investigate the relationship among academic procrastination, resilience, performance, anxiety, stress and self-regulation.	Questionnaire data were collected from students and teachers and analysed through Likert-scale-based statistical methods.	Procrastination was negatively associated with academic self-regulation and strongly linked with stress and anxiety. Resilience reduced psychological difficulties, while male students demonstrated higher procrastination tendencies.

2	Munda (2024)	To examine the association of academic procrastination with achievement, resilience, anxiety, stress and academic self-regulation among secondary students.	A quantitative questionnaire-based approach was used to compare students with different levels of procrastination.	Classroom pressure contributed to 87% of procrastination symptoms, while 47% of respondents identified parental pressure. Resilience supported academic performance, whereas stress and anxiety negatively affected it.
3	Muliarta et al. (2023)	To analyse variations in academic stress among pre-clinical students across academic years and situations.	Observational analytical study involving 384 first- to fourth-year students of Udayana University. Stress index and diagnostic questionnaires were administered.	Male students recorded higher severe stress on several indicators. Stress differed significantly across academic batches and changed during holidays, lectures and examination periods.
4	Şemsi et al. (2023)	To examine changes in biological stress markers before and after examinations.	Forty-four adults were divided into pre- and post-examination groups. Salivary cortisol, neuropeptide Y and IL-1β were measured using ELISA.	Cortisol, NPY and IL-1β levels were significantly higher after examinations. The findings demonstrated that acute examination stress affected hormonal and inflammatory responses.
5	Koudela-Hamila et al. (2022)	To assess the psychological and physiological effects of academic examinations on undergraduate students.	A multimodal study of 154 undergraduates using electronic diaries and blood-pressure devices at the semester's beginning and before examinations.	Examination periods were associated with reduced calmness, negative emotions, increased academic demands, lower control, social withdrawal and altered cortisol and blood-pressure patterns.
6	Yousif et al. (2022)	To assess academic stress, its causes and coping strategies among pharmacy students during the COVID-19 pandemic.	Descriptive cross-sectional study using validated self-administered questionnaires among randomly selected University of Khartoum pharmacy students.	Most students experienced moderate academic stress, especially during examinations. Difficulty recalling studied material and fear of examinations were major stressors, while prayer and situational control were common coping methods.
7	Akulwar-Tajane et al. (2021)	To investigate academic stress and students' experiences of online examinations during the COVID-19 pandemic.	Cross-sectional online survey involving 642 undergraduate physiotherapy students.	Approximately 94.4% of respondents experienced academic stress. Examination-related and psychosocial factors strongly affected mental health, learning, academic performance and the overall online-examination experience.

8	Ramadhani and Mahmudiono (2021)	To examine the relationship between academic stress and emotional eating among adolescents.	Cross-sectional study involving 133 students selected through cluster random sampling. Standardised stress, eating-behaviour and food-frequency questionnaires were used.	Moderate stress was reported by 47.4% of students, while 51.1% showed emotional eating. Academic stress was significantly related to emotional eating and increased consumption of unhealthy foods and sweet beverages.
9	Wuthrich et al. (2020)	To review the nature, prevalence and associated factors of distress among students in the final two years of secondary school.	Systematic review of 60 studies conducted across 17 countries.	Nearly one in six students experienced excessive distress. Gender, anxiety, perfectionism, sleep, homework, resilience, coping and school, family and peer connectedness influenced stress levels.
10	Moawad (2020)	To identify the major sources of academic stress among university students during the COVID-19 pandemic.	Content research analysis involving students of the College of Education at King Saud University, Saudi Arabia.	The sudden shift to virtual learning created academic and psychological pressure. Uncertainty regarding end-semester examinations and assessment procedures emerged as the leading source of student stress.

IV. Conclusion

The reviewed literature clearly indicates that academic procrastination is a major contributor to examination stress among senior secondary students. Delaying academic tasks reduces preparation time, increases anxiety, lowers self-confidence, and negatively affects academic performance during examinations. Studies consistently show that fear of failure, perfectionism, parental expectations, classroom pressure, and inadequate time management encourage procrastination, which subsequently intensifies psychological stress. The evidence also demonstrates that examination stress affects not only students' emotional well-being but also their physiological health through increased stress biomarkers. Conversely, academic resilience, positive coping strategies, effective self-regulation, and institutional psychological support significantly reduce stress and improve academic outcomes. Although the reviewed studies were conducted across different educational settings, their findings are highly relevant to CISCE students, who experience intense academic competition and examination pressure. Therefore, schools should strengthen counselling services, promote time-management and study-skills training, encourage healthy coping mechanisms, and involve parents in creating supportive learning environments. Addressing academic procrastination at an early stage can substantially reduce examination stress, improve students' psychological well-being, and enhance academic success. Future empirical research focusing specifically on CISCE students will further strengthen evidence for targeted educational and mental health interventions.

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