

## THE EFFECTS OF MEDITATION ON ACADEMIC STRESS IN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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### **Abstract**

*High school students should be very concerned about academic stress because it can negatively affect both their academic achievement and general well-being. Meditation has been proposed as a potential intervention to alleviate academic stress. This study examined how high school students' psychological health and levels of academic stress were affected by meditation. Stress is the result of outside forces acting beyond one's control and causing mental or emotional distress. Adolescent males and girls aged 14-18 studying 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> class were assessed for academic stress levels. There were 250 kids in the sample, 120 boys and 120 girls. It has been determined and standardised that the 40-item Academic Stress Scale, and administered to assess cognitive, affective, behavioral, physical, and social stressors. Gender did not appear to have any bearing on the Physical, Social, Cognitive, or Affective categories. Using the perceived stress scale, or PSS, students' anxiety levels were statistically assessed. Out of the five elements—physical, familial, academic, relational, and social— according to this study, academic worries were the second largest source of stress, after social considerations. Relationship and family issues were the least significant sources of stress, after physical issues.*

**Keywords:** Academic stress, Meditation, Adolescent male, Perceived stress scale, emotional regulation, mental health.

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Meditation is an ancient practice that helps you unwind your body and deal with life's stresses [1]. Meditation also helps you attain a state of flow, think clearly, & maintain concentration. Meditation has a significant impact on your productivity; it will also help you improve your academic performance [2]. Academic stress among high school students is a prevalent issue that can significantly impact their well-being and academic performance. As the demands and pressures of schoolwork continue to rise, students often experience heightened levels of stress, which can lead to various negative outcomes [3]. Therefore, exploring effective interventions to mitigate academic stress in high school students is crucial for promoting their overall mental health and academic success. One such intervention that has gained attention is meditation, a practice known for its potential to reduce stress and enhance well-being.

The benefits of meditation for reducing stress have been the subject of numerous research, with adults and college students among the populations studied. Only a small amount of research,

meanwhile, has particularly examined how meditation affects high school students' academic stress [4]. It is crucial to comprehend how meditation affects this particular type of stress because it has a direct impact on students' academic achievement and long-term educational goals.

Mindfulness meditation, in particular, has shown promise as an effective approach to reducing stress and enhancing well-being [5]. By encouraging students to engage in mindfulness practices, such as deep breathing, body scan exercises, and awareness of thoughts and emotions, they can develop skills to manage academic stress more effectively. It has been demonstrated that mindfulness-based therapies increase emotional regulation, focus, and attention span, and promote overall mental well-being [6].

### **1.1 Academic achievement**

For modern civilizations to meet their ever-increasing scientific & technological demands, high-capacity human resources are crucial. This is only one illustration of how the concept of accomplishment is becoming more popular in contemporary societies. The achievement has had an impact on a variety of fields, including education, social & physical science, literature, art, & other spheres of existence [7].

The knowledge and skills a student has acquired via formal education and training are measured by standardised exams and are stated in terms of grades or units based on norms derived from a statistical sample of students' performance. This is known as academic accomplishment [8]. There is proof that even minor stress can negatively affect work performance. The cognitive responses to stress have the immediate effect of making it difficult to concentrate.

Academic achievement is sometimes characterized as "a level of proficiency achieved in academic work or as formally acquired knowledge in school subjects, which is often expressed by the percentage of marks obtained by students in examinations". According to test results or instructor evaluations, a student's level of academic performance is referred to as "academic achievement". The final grade point average of a student is frequently referred to as evidence of their "academic success" [9].

### **1.2 Academic stress**

"Academic stress" is a spectral creature that dominates many students' life. The contemporary educational system is plagued with worry as a result of the quick rate of societal change, which is neither healthy nor inspiring for today's children [10]. The curriculum is intended to overload kids with information, instilling a fear of learning during a critical developmental stage. Children marching with an excessive quantity of schoolwork can be distinguished by their slumped posture. The living conditions of children in the third world create various challenges to their development. Inside and outside of the classroom, the student faces several hurdles. Academic stress has developed as a significant mental health issue among late adolescents & young adults, among the many issues they experience. High expectations, rivalry, & uncertainty all contribute to exam anxiety [11]. As a result, a large number of pupils will fail their exams. Students' lives in schools are plagued with anxiety as a result of their mistrust of teachers and the sometimes-conflicting expectations of society and their families. Students' worry, frustration, & academic failure are exacerbated by an institution's increased emphasis on competition.

Pupils in tenth grade have it harder than pupils in prior grades due to the increased burden. Tenth-graders are stressed for a variety of reasons, including trying to do too much in too little time, disregarding their physical health, obsessing over their mistakes, being trapped in the past, worrying about the future, and evaluating others by their own standards [12].

Researchers have long been curious about the causes and consequences of academic stress among secondary school students. Academic commitments, weak study abilities, peer group competition, high parental expectations, & a lack of time management skills all contribute to high levels of anxiety among students in their tenth year of school [13]. When stress is misinterpreted or becomes excessive, it can have a severe influence on one's health and academic performance.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Academic stress is a pervasive and worrisome phenomenon that has substantial ramifications for the overall well-being and academic achievement of high school pupils. Students are frequently overburdened by the demands of extracurricular activities, examinations, homework, and social life as they strive to achieve superior academic results. The effects of meditation as an intervention to alleviate academic stress among high school pupils are investigated in this section. Meditation, an ageless discipline, has garnered acclaim for its purported capacity to alleviate tension, enhance focus, and elevate affective state. The objective of this review is to assess the effectiveness of the existing body of research in mitigating academic stress. Meditation is a mental exercise characterised by the concentration of one's attention on a particular object, thought, or activity, frequently accompanied by regulated respiration.

**Saxena et al. (2020) [14]** explored how Hatha yoga affected pupils' concentration and anxiety. According to this study, academic worries were the second largest source of stress, after social considerations. Instructors randomised the control groups (YG, CG) and yoga assignments for each class. Young adults (YG) had two 25-minute Hatha yoga sessions each week for 12 weeks ( $n = 123$ ). The CG had 51 members. At the start and end of the 12 weeks, students took stress, inattention, and hyperactivity self-report tests and the ADHD normal behaviour rating scale. Initial comparisons between the YG and CG showed no differences in attention, hyperactivity, or stress ( $p = 0.86, 0.25, 0.28$ ). There was a significant interaction between group and time inattention evaluations ( $b = -1.09, SE = 0.30, p < 0.001$ ). Despite the fact that CG distraction was significantly greater than YG distraction ( $d = 0.27$ ), a paired t-test revealed that CG distraction was significantly less. ( $b = -0.43, p = 0.1, SE = 0.26$ ). Time and group did not significantly affect hyperactivity. When comparing the YG and the CG, pairwise t-tests revealed that the YG reduced hyperactivity by a significant amount ( $d = 0.22$ ). Group and time did not significantly predict distress slope variation ( $p = 0.43, b = -0.93, SE = 1.19$ ). Both groups' distress did not decrease significantly, according to pairwise t-tests. These data suggest Hatha yoga may help high school pupils with attention and hyperactivity.

**Vats et al. (2020) [15]** examined the impact of Preksha Meditation on exam anxiety in adolescent girls. A total of 120 high school students from the capital of India took part in the study. All of the students ranged in age from 13 to 15. They also came from similar socioeconomic origins. 120 individuals total, evenly divided between the experimental and control groups. A trained instructor

taught Preksha Meditation to the trial's experimental group for one hour per day, for three months at a time, six days a week; after that, for three more months. Rather than receiving any extra assignments, the participants comprising the control group persisted in their customary undertakings. The Academic Anxiety Scale was used during various stages of data collection, including pre-experimental, post-experimental phase-I, & post-experimental phase-II. The two-tailed t-test with  $\alpha =$  or  $p < 0.05$  was used for group comparisons on the data, and Sandler's 'A' test was used for comparisons within each group. According to the study, regular practice of Preksha Meditation led to statistically and academically significant benefits.

**Hj. Ramli et al. (2018) [18]** examined Undergraduates in the Klang Valley of Malaysia are requested to contemplate the potential mediating influence of mindfulness on the relationship between self-regulation and academic stress in this research endeavour. 380 college students from the Klang Valley of Malaysia took part in this study. In a study using correlational analysis, high correlations were found between academic stress, self-regulation, and mindfulness. However, mindfulness was not discovered to perform that role when the mediating role was studied using SPSS.

**Hotkar et al. (2017) [19]** conducted a study named Sahaja Yoga meditation's importance in lowering academic stress is examined in "Significance of Sahaja Yoga meditation in reducing academic stress". A non-blinded, non-control group design was employed in this study. The study involved students from a school in Mumbai, India. Two groups of students were formed, one acting as a control group and the other as an experiment. While the experimental group underwent a 6-week Sahaja Yoga meditation program, the control group received no therapy at all. For both groups of people, it was business as usual. Prior to and during their participation in the 6-week Sahaja Yoga meditation programme, participants' stress levels were measured by the use of a questionnaire. The t-test, a popular statistical technique, was used to analyze the data gathered and make inferences on the study's results. Six weeks into the Sahaja Yoga meditation practice, A significant reduction in academic stress was observed ( $p < 0.05$ ). However, there was no statistically significant decrease in academic stress among the control group ( $p > 0.05$ ). Girls who engage in Sahaja Yoga meditation find it simpler to handle the demands of school.

**Dr. Sunita et al. (2017) [20]** conducted research on "The Effect of Vipassana Meditation on Academic Stress among Adolescents." 50 non-randomly chosen teenagers (between the ages of 15 and 18) took part in the study. Use the Bisht Battery of Scales to collect data on academic stress using a pre- and post-testing technique. They successfully completed two-sample t-tests for the pre- and post-tests. Based on a two simplest' test analysis, Vipassana Meditation was determined to be a successful treatment for reducing adolescent academic stress.

**Bamber et al. (2016) [22]** examined the stress and anxiety levels of university students, with a study of mindfulness integration serving as a secondary goal. In 57 studies, it was discovered that mindfulness meditation helped university students feel less stressed & anxious. Studies on anxiety, subjective stress, physiological stress, and mindfulness totaled forty, thirty-four, eleven, and twenty-four respectively. In 33 of 40 trials & 25 of 34 investigations, respectively, there were significant decreases in stress and anxiety, and in 22 of 24 studies, there was an increase in

mindfulness. The inconsistent results linked to physiological stress call for more research. Positive are the study's findings regarding the way in which mindfulness meditation decreases anxiety and tension among college students. Because there are so many diverse ways used by various programs, quantitative evaluation (meta-analysis) is necessary to determine the most successful type of mindfulness intervention.

**Burns et al. (2011) [23]** investigated how Transcendental Meditation (TM) affected 43 undergraduate students' levels of stress, anxiety, melancholy, & idealization. The factors were previously examined using self-report methods. Student groups received TM instruction & were urged to routinely practice for two semesters. Post-TM exams were administered at the end of each semester. Across all groups, all metrics decreased dramatically. The use of meditational techniques in treating college students is suggested in some cases. The study revealed that transcendental meditation was advantageous for students.

**Table 1. Comparison table of review**

<b>Authors</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Methodology/Approach</b>	<b>Findings</b>
<b>Saxena et al. (2020) [14]</b>	Hatha yoga effects on concentration and anxiety	Quasi-experimental, self-report tests	High school children who practise hatha yoga may experience less stress, hyperactivity, and inattention.
<b>Vats et al. (2020) [15]</b>	Preksha Meditation on exam anxiety	Experimental, Academic Anxiety Scale	Regular Preksha Meditation reduces academic anxiety in adolescent girls.
<b>Hj. Ramli et al. (2018) [16]</b>	Mindfulness as mediator between stress & self-regulation	Correlational analysis	High correlations between academic stress, self-regulation, and mindfulness.
<b>Hotkar et al. (2017) [17]</b>	Effects of Sahaja Yoga meditation on stress	Non-blinded, non-control group design	Sahaja Yoga meditation reduces academic stress in students, especially girls.
<b>Dr. Sunita et al. (2017) [18]</b>	Effect of Vipassana Meditation on academic stress	Pre- and post-testing, t-tests	Vipassana Meditation is successful in reducing adolescent academic stress.
<b>Bamber et al. (2016) [19]</b>	Mindfulness meditation on stress & anxiety	Meta-analysis, review of studies	Mindfulness meditation reduces stress and anxiety, but physiological stress needs more research.
<b>Burns et al. (2011) [20]</b>	Effects of Transcendental Meditation (TM)	Longitudinal study, self-report methods	Transcendental Meditation is beneficial in reducing stress, anxiety, and more.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Participants

There were 250 high school participants in the research. The participants, whose ages and grade levels varied from 14 to 18, were chosen from a variety of nearby high schools. When choosing who to recruit, factors including their availability and willingness to engage in the data gathering process were taken into account. This study set out to find out how much academic stress Indian boys and girls in grades 9 through 12 faced between the ages of 14 and 18. An inventory of high schools in India was compiled by the District Education Officer for Haryana. This survey was conducted in January and February of 2023 by two State Board of Education Government schools, two private schools, two CBSE schools, and two State Board schools.

### 3.2 Data Collection

Out of the 236 pupils in the sample, 133 were males. Twenty boys and twenty girls were enrolled in each English-medium private school between the ages of 14 and 18, whereas forty boys and forty girls attended each government high school with a single gender. Enrolled were students who gave their permission to be part of the study and have parental approval.

### 3.3 Tool for data collection

250 adolescent boys and girls were administered the forty items comprising the Academic Stress Scale, which represented the five stressor domains of cognitive, affective, behavioural, somatic, and social. The participants allocated a numerical value of one to each item on the following five-point Likert scale: Strongly Agree (SA) five, Agree four, Don't Know three, Disagree two, and Strongly Disagree one. A subsample of fifty individuals was utilised to assess the internal consistency of the Academic Stress Scale through the application of the Cronbach's Alpha test (Cronbach's Alpha value = 0.78).

### 3.4 Data Analysis

Along with examining the differences in academic stress experienced by boys and girls, the relationship between gender and domain-specific academic stress was also examined. The data were gathered and evaluated using the proper statistical techniques, such as a t-test on independent samples. To examine and evaluate the data, Excel's descriptive analysis and percentages were combined with graphs, charts, and tables.

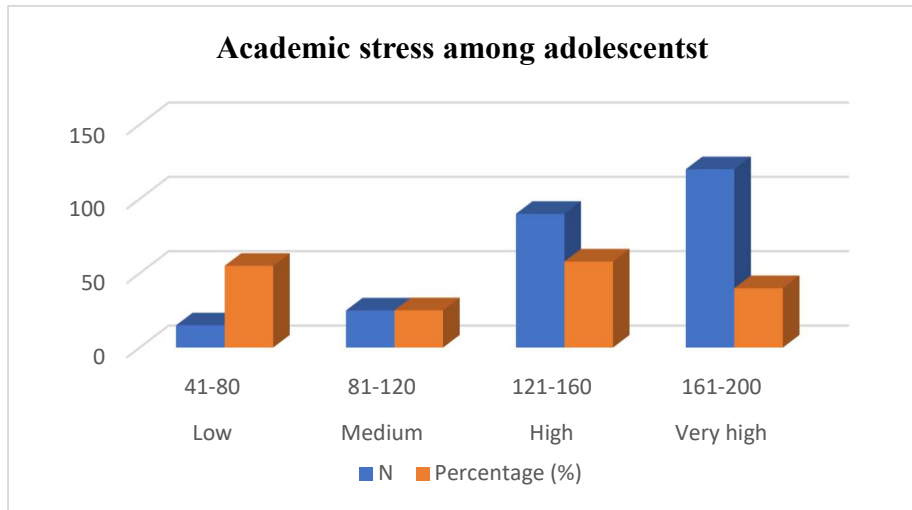
## 4. Results

The study's findings show that high school pupils frequently experience academic stress, with varying levels of perceived stress reported by the participants. In this study also revealed that a substantial proportion of participants felt that meditation improved their general well-being and reduced their levels of academic stress.

**Table 2: Shows the total academic stress adolescents face.**

S. No	Overall Academic stress	Scores	N	Percentage(%)
1	Low	41-80	15	15
2	Medium	81-120	25	25.1

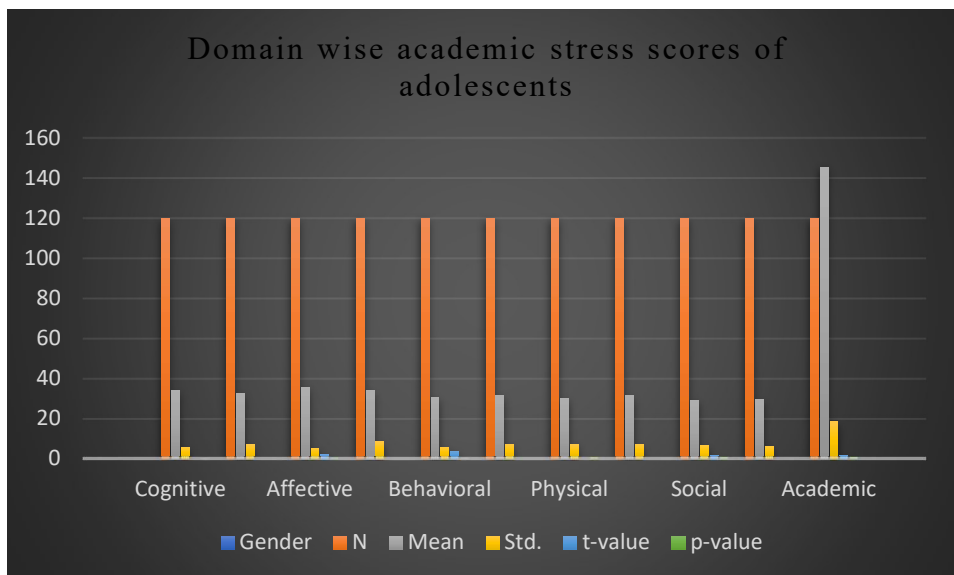
<b>3</b>	<b>High</b>	121-160	90	57.9
<b>4</b>	<b>Very high</b>	161-200	120	40.0
<b>Total</b>			250	100.0



**Figure 1: Academic stress among adolescents**

**Table 3: Adolescent’s domain-specific assessments of academic stress**

S. No.	Stress or Domain	Medium		High		Very high		Total	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
<b>1</b>	Cognitive	5	2.3	90	38.7	160	66.1	250	100
<b>2</b>	Affective	6	1.4	99	42.4	145	62.2	250	100
<b>3</b>	Behavioral	20	7.3	162	68.3	68	29.5	250	100
<b>4</b>	Physical	34	15.0	140	62.6	76	35.4	250	100
<b>5</b>	Social	45	24.6	150	68.4	55	25.0	250	100



**Figure 2: Adolescents’s domain-specific assessments of Academic stress**

The objective of this research endeavour was to investigate the levels of academic stress encountered by male and female tenth-grade students, as well as to compare the perceptions of academic stress among this population. The results of the study show that a grade point average can vary from 40 to 200, with 200 being the highest conceivable. Based on the collective ratings for academic stress, the sample was classified into the following categories: exceedingly high (161-200), medium (81–120), low (41–80), and high (121–160). Table 2 and Figure 2 reveal that of the students polled, 40% indicated extremely high academic stress, 25% reported medium stress, and none expressed mild stress. About 42.3% of teenagers in the behavioural domain, 68.3% in the physical domain, 66.1% in the affective domain, 68.2% in the cognitive domain, and 62.1% in the social domain indicated significant levels of stress. Very high levels of stress were indicated by most youths in both the affective and cognitive areas. Adolescents experienced significant levels of stress in the three remaining domains: physical, behavioural, and social.

**Table 4: Difference between girls and boys with regard to Academic Stress**

S. No	Stressor Domain	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	p-value
1	Cognitive	Girls	120	33.71	5.67	4.311*	0.040
		Boys	120	32.45	6.70		
2	Affective	Girls	120	35.46	5.04	1.937	0.380
		Boys	120	33.90	8.17		
3	Behavioral	Girls	120	30.55	5.61	3.362	0.199
		Boys	120	31.30	6.84		
4	Physical	Girls	120	29.86	6.76	4.213*	0.728
		Boys	120	31.23	6.86		



5	Social	Girls	120	29.04	6.44	1.583	0.702
		Boys	120	29.40	6.07		
6	Academic Stress score	Girls	120	145.62	18.32	1.670	0.780
		Boys	120	147.28	24.81		

\* Significant at 6% level

\*\* Significant at 2% level

Using a t-test on independent samples, the difference between females and males in terms of Academic Stress was analyzed. The discrepancies in how male and female students perceive their academic stress based on the stressor The domain names are presented in Table 4. Regarding the level of academic tension encountered, a statistically significant disparity was observed between the sexes in the cognitive domain. At the 0.05 level of significance, females reported significantly higher stress levels (33.71 5.67) than males (32.45 6.70) ( $t=4.311^*$  and  $p=0.040$ ). In the cognitive domain of stress, processes such as data and knowledge recognition, recall, comprehension, analysis, and synthesis are included. Stress that is too great in this area might affect memory, hearing, focus, and other mental functions. Significant differences in physical stress levels were observed between boys and girls at the 0.05 level ( $t=4.213^*$  and  $p=0.728$ ), with males demonstrating higher levels (29.23 6.86) compared to girls (31.23 6.76). High levels of physical tension may influence a person's eating and sleeping habits, which in turn may impair their cognitive abilities. In this revealed that 29.1 percent of secondary school students were distressed. Top 10 causes that cause students stress include tests, overlearning, difficulty understanding what they have learned, excessive homework, and a packed schedule of classes. Every stressor had a connection to academic problems. The next ten stressors on the list, however, were assessed as being between moderate and extremely stressful.

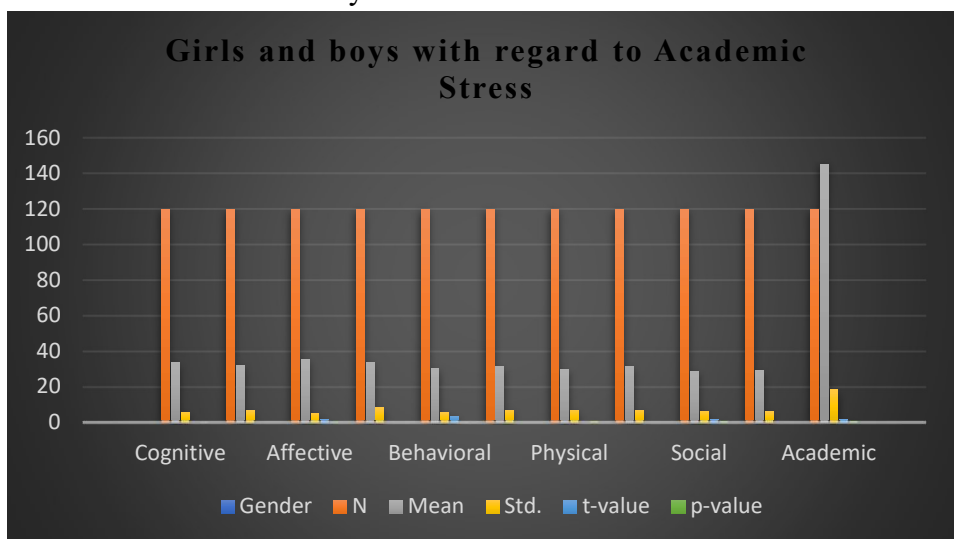


Figure 3: Girls and Boys with regard to Academic Stress

### CONCLUSION

Academic tension is a major concern for high school students because it has the potential to negatively impact their mental health and academic performance. Meditation has emerged as a

potential remedy to mitigate the effects of academic stress as a novel approach. The intricate dynamics of high school students' academic stress and to look into the possible benefits of meditation on their stress levels and psychological well-being. Based on the concept of mental or emotional strain resulting from external constraints exceeding an individual's coping abilities, stress was studied among male and female adolescents aged 14 to 18 and enrolled in ninth through twelfth grades. The investigation involved a diverse sample of 250 students, including 120 boys and 120 girls. The study employed a 40-item Academic Stress Scale that was meticulously devised to assess cognitive, affective, behavioral, physical, and social stressors. Interestingly, there was no statistically significant relationship found in the domains of cognition, mood, somatics, and social interaction between gender and stress levels. By employing the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) as a quantitative research instrument, the investigation illuminated the extent of stress experienced by students. The findings revealed a nuanced comprehension of the most significant stressors, with social factors emerging as the primary contributor, followed closely by academic factors. In contrast, physical, family, and interpersonal factors exerted relatively less influence on stress levels. In this study explored gender differences in academic stress perceptions, particularly among tenth-graders. Girls reported significantly greater stress levels in the cognitive domain, highlighting the importance of cognitive functions such as recognition, recall, comprehension, and synthesis. Similarly, males exhibited elevated levels of physical stress, which may have implications for their daily routines and cognitive abilities. In addition, the research revealed the prevalence of distress among secondary school students, with academic concerns constituting the majority of stressors. The prevalence of factors such as dread of academic placements, exam pressure, content overload, comprehension difficulties, excessive homework, and crowded schedules highlights the need for individualized interventions. In this study concludes with valuable insights into the complex interplay of academic stressors and the potential of meditation as a tool for regulating stress among high school students. Recognizing the multifaceted nature of stress sources and their gender-specific implications, academic establishments are obliged to give precedence to comprehensive strategies for safeguarding the mental well-being of their pupils. The findings of this research support more research into and application of meditation as a practical method to lessen the detrimental effects of academic stress and promote an atmosphere that is favourable to learning, growth, and wellbeing. Incorporating meditation programs in high school settings may provide valuable support for students in managing academic stress and promoting overall well-being. However, more studies using real subjects are required to corroborate these results and investigate the long-term impacts of meditation on high school students' academic stress.

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