

Academic Stress, Self-Efficacy and Academic Achievement among B.Ed. Students: A Conceptual Review

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Abstract:

Academic stress and self-efficacy are important psychological factors that may influence students' learning experiences and academic achievement in higher education. Students pursuing the Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) programme are required to manage academic assignments, examinations, lesson planning, teaching practice, school internships, and other professional responsibilities. These demands may create academic stress and influence students' confidence in their ability to perform academic tasks. The present paper examines the conceptual relationship among academic stress, self-efficacy, and academic achievement among B.Ed. students through a narrative review of relevant literature. It discusses the possible influence of academic stress on learning, the role of self-efficacy in motivation and persistence, and the implications of these constructs for teacher education. Existing research suggests that self-efficacy is associated with academic performance, while the relationship between stress and achievement is complex and may depend on personal, social, and educational factors. The paper highlights the importance of supportive teaching practices, academic counselling, effective study strategies, and stress-management programmes in teacher education institutions. It also identifies the need for context-specific empirical research involving B.Ed. students, particularly in Indian teacher education settings.

Keywords: Academic Stress, Self-Efficacy, Academic Achievement, B.Ed. Students, Teacher Education, Educational Psychology

1. Introduction

Teacher education plays a significant role in preparing competent, reflective, and professionally responsible teachers. The Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) programme equips prospective teachers with pedagogical knowledge, subject understanding, classroom management skills, and practical teaching experience. However, the demands associated with teacher education may create academic and psychological challenges for student-teachers.

B.Ed. students must often balance theoretical coursework, internal assessments, practical activities, lesson planning, teaching practice, school internships, and university examinations. These responsibilities may become particularly demanding when students have limited time, insufficient institutional support, financial concerns, or competing personal responsibilities. Such conditions may contribute to academic stress and affect students' learning experiences. Academic achievement is commonly reflected in examination results, grades, assignment performance, and other indicators of educational progress. Although academic achievement depends on multiple factors, psychological variables such as motivation, confidence, anxiety, study habits, and perceived stress may also be relevant.

Self-efficacy is another important construct in educational psychology. Bandura (1997) described self-efficacy as an individual's belief in their capability to organise and execute the actions required to achieve particular outcomes. In an educational context, students with stronger academic self-efficacy may be more willing to attempt difficult tasks, persist when facing challenges, and use effective learning strategies.

The relationship among academic stress, self-efficacy, and academic achievement therefore deserves attention in teacher education. Understanding these constructs may help teacher educators develop learning environments that support both academic performance and students' psychological well-being.

The present paper discusses these relationships through a conceptual review of relevant research and considers their implications for B.Ed. programmes.

2. Conceptual Understanding of the Major Variables

2.1 Academic Stress

Academic stress refers to the psychological strain students experience when they perceive academic demands as difficult to manage with their available time, resources, abilities, or coping strategies.

Academic stress may arise from examinations, heavy workloads, deadlines, competitive expectations, fear of failure, inadequate preparation, and uncertainty regarding academic performance.

Among B.Ed. students, potential sources of stress include:

1. Preparation for university and internal examinations.
2. Completion of assignments, practical files, and lesson plans.
3. Management of teaching practice and school internship responsibilities.
4. Classroom observation and evaluation by supervisors.
5. Balancing academic responsibilities with family or employment.

6. Concerns about professional competence and future employment.

Stress should not necessarily be considered harmful in every situation. A manageable level of pressure may encourage preparation and goal-directed behaviour. However, persistent or overwhelming stress may interfere with concentration, sleep, motivation, and effective learning.

Cohen, Kamarck, and Mermelstein (1983) developed the Perceived Stress Scale to assess the extent to which individuals appraise situations in their lives as stressful. Although this scale measures perceived stress generally rather than academic stress specifically, it provides an important foundation for understanding subjective stress experiences.

2.2 Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is an individual's belief in their capacity to perform particular actions successfully. According to Bandura (1997), these beliefs influence how individuals approach challenging tasks, how much effort they invest, and how persistently they respond to difficulties.

In teacher education, self-efficacy may be considered in relation to academic learning, teaching practice, lesson planning, classroom management, and the ability to handle unfamiliar situations.

For example, a B.Ed. student who believes they can prepare an effective lesson plan may be more likely to revise the plan, seek feedback, and continue working when difficulties arise. In contrast, a student with low confidence may avoid challenging tasks or interpret initial difficulties as evidence of inability.

Self-efficacy is not identical to self-esteem. Self-esteem concerns a person's overall evaluation of their own worth, whereas self-efficacy concerns perceived capability to perform a particular task or achieve a particular goal.

Self-efficacy may be strengthened through successful experiences, observation of competent peers, constructive feedback, and appropriate emotional support. These sources are particularly relevant in teacher education, where students gradually develop professional competence through supervised practice.

2.3 Academic Achievement

Academic achievement refers to the level of performance students attain in educational activities. It may be measured through examination marks, semester grades, cumulative grade point averages, assignment scores, or other established academic indicators.

For research involving B.Ed. students, university examination marks or cumulative academic scores may provide a measurable indicator of achievement, subject to institutional permissions and participant consent.

Academic achievement is multidimensional. It may be influenced by prior academic preparation, motivation, study habits, attendance, access to learning resources, teaching quality, family circumstances, and psychological factors.

Consequently, neither academic stress nor self-efficacy should be treated as the sole explanation for students' academic performance.

3. Review of Related Literature

3.1 Academic Stress and Academic Outcomes

Research on higher education indicates that stress and academic success are related in complex ways. Lisnyj et al. (2023), in a systematic review of research on post-secondary students, examined factors associated with stress and academic success. Their review highlighted the relevance of academic, psychological, behavioural, demographic, and interpersonal factors.

These findings suggest that academic stress should be understood within the broader educational and social environment rather than as an isolated characteristic of individual students.

For B.Ed. students, the combination of theoretical coursework and practical teaching responsibilities may create distinctive pressures. Nevertheless, the extent to which these pressures are associated with examination performance among B.Ed. students requires direct investigation.

3.2 Self-Efficacy and Academic Achievement

Honicke and Broadbent (2016) conducted a systematic review examining the influence of academic self-efficacy on university students' academic performance. Their review reported a moderate association between academic self-efficacy and academic performance and discussed factors that may help explain this relationship, including effort regulation, learning strategies, and goal orientations.

This literature provides a theoretical basis for examining self-efficacy among B.Ed. students. Students who believe they can manage academic tasks may demonstrate greater persistence and engagement. However, confidence alone does not guarantee academic success; adequate preparation, learning opportunities, and effective study practices remain important.

Research has also considered the possibility that the relationship is reciprocal. Honicke and Broadbent's review noted the need for further research to clarify causal relationships. Academic experiences may contribute to self-efficacy, just as self-efficacy may be associated with subsequent performance.

3.3 Stress and Academic Self-Efficacy

Hitches, Woodcock, and Ehrich (2022) examined stress and academic self-efficacy among university students in their study, *Building self-efficacy without letting stress knock it down: Stress and academic self-efficacy of university students*. Their work provides a relevant basis for considering how students' stress experiences and beliefs about their academic capabilities may interact. When students perceive academic demands as exceeding their available resources, their confidence in managing tasks may be challenged. Conversely, students who believe they can cope with difficult situations may be better positioned to persist and use constructive strategies.

However, the relationship should not be assumed to be identical across all student populations. B.Ed. students have specific pedagogical and practical responsibilities that may distinguish their experiences from those of students in other higher education programmes.

3.4 Psychosocial Factors and Academic Performance

Tindle et al. (2022), in a scoping review of psychosocial correlates of academic performance, identified several factors associated with university students' performance, including motivation, stress, self-efficacy, social support, study effort, adjustment, and emotional experiences.

This broader perspective supports an integrated approach to teacher education research. Academic achievement may be better understood by considering psychological factors alongside institutional conditions and students' learning behaviours.

3.5 Research Gap

The literature discussed above establishes the relevance of examining stress, self-efficacy, and academic performance in higher education. However, findings from general university populations cannot automatically be generalised to B.Ed. students.

Teacher education involves distinctive demands, including teaching practice, lesson preparation, school internship, and the development of professional teaching skills. The relationships among academic stress, self-efficacy, and academic achievement within this context require further context-specific investigation.

Research involving B.Ed. students from Indian teacher education institutions could help clarify whether these variables are associated in this population and whether relationships differ according to relevant educational or demographic characteristics.

The present conceptual review therefore provides a rationale for conducting an empirical study among B.Ed. students, including those enrolled in teacher education institutions in Bihar.

4. Objectives of the Paper

The objectives of the present conceptual review are:

1. To explain the concepts of academic stress, self-efficacy, and academic achievement.
2. To examine the relationships among these variables in the context of higher education.
3. To discuss the possible relevance of academic stress and self-efficacy to B.Ed. students.
4. To identify implications for teaching, academic counselling, and student support.
5. To highlight the need for empirical research within Indian teacher education institutions.

5. Methodology

The present paper adopts a narrative review approach. It draws on selected published literature concerning perceived stress, self-efficacy, and academic performance in higher education.

Relevant literature was identified using concepts and search terms related to academic stress, perceived stress, self-efficacy, academic achievement, university students, and teacher education. The discussion incorporates foundational

work on perceived stress and self-efficacy alongside published reviews and research articles addressing academic performance.

The literature was examined conceptually to identify recurring themes, possible relationships among the major variables, and implications for teacher education.

The present manuscript is a conceptual narrative review rather than a systematic review or an original empirical investigation. It does not report newly collected participant data, original statistical analyses, or a systematic screening of all available studies. The review is therefore intended to develop a conceptual understanding and provide a basis for future empirical research.

6. Discussion

The reviewed literature indicates that academic stress, self-efficacy, and academic achievement are important and potentially interrelated dimensions of students' educational experiences.

Academic stress may arise when students perceive academic demands as exceeding their available resources. In a B.Ed. programme, these demands may involve examinations, assignments, lesson planning, teaching practice, and internship responsibilities. If students experience persistent stress, their ability to concentrate, plan their work, or maintain effective study routines may be affected.

Self-efficacy may influence how students interpret and respond to these demands. Students with stronger beliefs in their capabilities may be more likely to persist, seek feedback, and adopt alternative strategies when they encounter academic difficulties. Students with lower self-efficacy may require additional encouragement, structured guidance, and opportunities to experience successful performance.

However, self-efficacy should not be interpreted as a substitute for institutional support. Students may have strong confidence but still face excessive workloads, limited resources, or inadequate instructional support. Similarly, students who experience stress may still perform well when they have effective coping strategies, sufficient preparation, and supportive learning environments.

The interaction among psychological and contextual factors is therefore important. Teacher education institutions should consider students' academic demands, opportunities for skill development, and access to constructive feedback when designing educational support programmes.

The literature also cautions against drawing causal conclusions from correlational relationships. If a study finds that self-efficacy is associated with higher academic achievement, it does not automatically establish that increasing self-efficacy alone will improve marks. Longitudinal and intervention-based studies may be required to investigate causal mechanisms more clearly.

For B.Ed. programmes, an integrated approach that combines academic guidance, teaching-practice support, effective learning strategies, and stress-management resources may provide a useful direction for future research and institutional practice.

7. Educational Implications

The conceptual discussion has several implications for teacher education institutions.

7.1 Academic Counselling

Institutions may provide academic counselling to help students identify sources of stress, establish realistic study schedules, and manage examination-related concerns.

7.2 Development of Self-Efficacy

Teacher educators can create opportunities for students to develop confidence through supervised teaching practice, manageable tasks, constructive feedback, and reflection on successful experiences.

7.3 Effective Workload Management

Assignment deadlines, practical requirements, and internship responsibilities should be communicated clearly and coordinated wherever possible. Predictable academic schedules may help students organise their work more effectively.

7.4 Support During School Internship

Mentoring and constructive supervision may help student-teachers deal with classroom difficulties and improve their confidence in professional teaching tasks.

7.5 Psychological Support

Institutions may offer stress-management workshops, peer-support activities, and referral pathways for students who require additional assistance.

7.6 Research-Informed Institutional Practices

Teacher education institutions should evaluate support initiatives using appropriate evidence rather than assuming that a particular intervention will benefit every student equally.

8. Limitations of the Paper

The present paper has several limitations. First, it is a conceptual narrative review and does not provide original empirical data from B.Ed. students. Second, it does not estimate the strength of the relationship among academic stress, self-efficacy, and academic achievement. Third, the literature discussed includes research from broader higher education populations, and its findings may not apply directly to all B.Ed. institutions or regional contexts.

Furthermore, the paper does not establish whether academic stress predicts academic achievement or whether self-efficacy moderates or mediates the relationship between stress and achievement. These questions require appropriately designed empirical research.

Future studies should examine these relationships using validated measures, clearly defined samples, and suitable statistical methods.

9. Suggestions for Future Research

Future researchers may investigate the relationship among academic stress, self-efficacy, and academic achievement among B.Ed. students in Bihar and other Indian states.

A correlational study could assess whether academic stress and self-efficacy are associated with students' examination marks. Researchers could also examine differences according to year of study, gender, type of institution, rural or urban background, or other theoretically justified variables.

A larger study involving multiple teacher education institutions could provide a broader understanding of students' experiences. Longitudinal research could further examine whether changes in stress and self-efficacy correspond to changes in academic performance over time.

Researchers should use validated instruments, report their sampling procedures and psychometric properties, obtain the required institutional permissions, and ensure confidentiality. If academic marks are collected, informed consent and appropriate protection of student records are essential.

10. Conclusion

Academic stress, self-efficacy, and academic achievement represent important dimensions of students' educational experiences. For B.Ed. students, the combination of academic coursework and practical teaching responsibilities makes these constructs relevant to understanding teacher preparation.

The literature reviewed in this paper suggests that self-efficacy is associated with academic performance and that the relationship between stress and academic success involves multiple psychological, behavioural, and contextual factors. Nevertheless, these relationships should not be assumed to be uniform or causal across different educational settings.

Teacher education institutions may benefit from providing structured academic guidance, supportive teaching practice, constructive feedback, and opportunities for students to develop effective coping and learning strategies.

Further empirical research specifically involving B.Ed. students is needed to establish how academic stress and self-efficacy are associated with academic achievement in Indian teacher education contexts. Such research may contribute to a more evidence-informed approach to student support and professional teacher preparation.

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