HOW STRESS AFFECTS LEARNING IN 8TH–9TH GRADE STUDENTS

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Abstract. This study examines how stress affects learning among 8th–9th grade students. The research was conducted at School No. 49 in Namangan city with 20 students. A mixed-method approach was used, including questionnaires, observation, informal interviews, and a short stress reflection activity. The results show that most students experience moderate to high stress, mainly because of exams, homework, and teacher expectations. Stress was found to reduce concentration, memory, and classroom participation, although a small amount of stress can sometimes increase motivation. Overall, the findings suggest that stress is an important factor in academic life and should be managed carefully to support better learning and well-being. According to Lazarus and Folkman[1], stress appears when a person feels that the demands are greater than the ability to cope. McEwen[2] explains that long-term stress can affect brain functions related to memory and learning. Pascoe, Hetrick, and Parker[3]

also note that high stress is often connected with lower academic performance. The APA[4] further reports that many students experience stress because of academic pressure and time-management problems.

Key words: stress, students, learning, academic performance, memory, concentration, motivation, school pressure

Introduction. Learning is very important for students because it helps them gain knowledge and build their future. However, learning is not always easy, and many students face different challenges during their studies. One of the most common and serious problems is stress. Nowadays, students experience stress almost every day. They feel pressure because of exams, homework, deadlines, and expectations from teachers and parents. From my own experience and observation, even hardworking and successful students sometimes feel nervous and lose confidence, especially before exams. Because of this, they cannot show their real abilities. It is important to understand that stress is not always negative. A small amount of stress can motivate students and make them more responsible. However, when stress becomes too high, it can negatively affect students' learning, concentration, and memory. That is why this study focuses on understanding how stress affects students' learning and what can be done to reduce its negative impact.

Background. Stress is a common psychological condition that affects many students in their academic life. It usually happens when students feel that they have too many responsibilities and cannot manage them properly. According to Lazarus and Folkman[1], stress occurs when a person feels that the demands of a situation are greater than their ability to cope with them. In school, these demands include exams, homework, and competition with classmates. McEwen[2] explains that long-term stress can affect the brain, especially the part responsible for memory and learning. This is why students sometimes study a lot but still forget information during exams. Pascoe, Hetrick, and Parker[3] also state that stress can reduce motivation and academic

performance. Students who are stressed often feel tired, anxious, and less interested in learning. In addition, the American Psychological Association[4] reports that many students experience stress because of academic pressure and time-management problems. From what I have personally observed, stress affects students not only mentally but also physically. Some students feel tired, have headaches, or cannot sleep well. Because of this, they come to class without enough energy and cannot focus properly. However, not all stress is harmful. A moderate level of stress can help students stay active and motivated. Therefore, it is important to understand both the positive and negative sides of stress in learning.

Aim and Research Questions. The main aim of this research is to investigate how stress affects the learning process of 8th–9th grade students.

This study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. How does stress affect students' learning?
2. What are the main causes of stress among students?
3. How does stress influence students' concentration, memory, and academic performance?

Methodology. This research was conducted at School No. 49 in Namangan city among 8th–9th grade students. A total of 20 students participated in the study, including 13 girls and 7 boys. The participants were selected randomly to make the results more reliable. In order to collect data, I used several simple and practical methods. Questionnaires were used to measure stress levels and to identify the main causes of stress. Classroom observation helped me see students' behavior, attention, and participation during lessons. Informal interviews were used to understand students' feelings and experiences. A short stress reflection activity also showed when students feel most stressed and how it affects them. I also compared students' stress levels with their classroom participation and academic performance. This helped me understand the connection between stress and learning more clearly.

Results. The results of the study showed that stress is very common among students. Based on the questionnaire, about 60% of students reported high stress levels, 30% had moderate stress, and only 10% said they feel low stress. This clearly shows that most students experience stress in their daily school life.

Table 1. Participants of the study

Group	Number	Percentage
Girls	13	65%
Boys	7	35%
Total	20	100%

Figure 1. Distribution of students by stress level

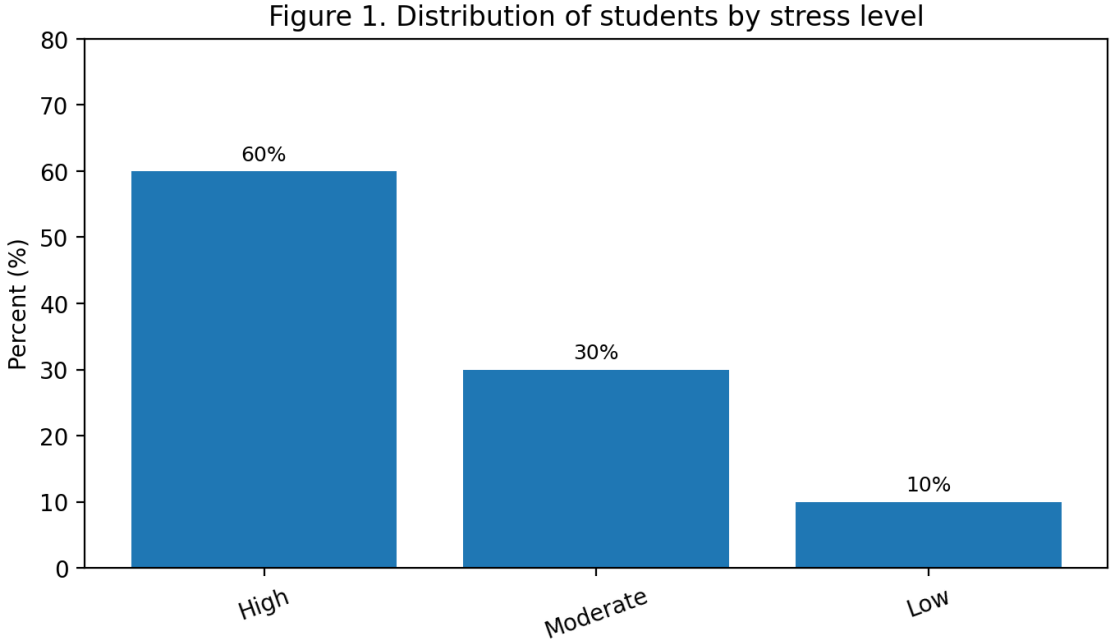


Figure 1. Distribution of students by stress level

When I asked about the causes of stress, the majority of students mentioned academic reasons. Around 70% of students said exams are the main source of stress, while 60% pointed to homework overload. In addition, 50% of students mentioned teacher expectations, and 40% said competition with classmates also makes them feel stressed. A smaller number, about 35%, said family pressure also affects them.

Table 2. Main causes of stress among students

Cause	Students	Percentage

Exams	14	70%
Homework overload	12	60%
Teacher expectations	10	50%
Peer competition	8	40%
Family pressure	7	35%

Figure 2. Main causes of stress

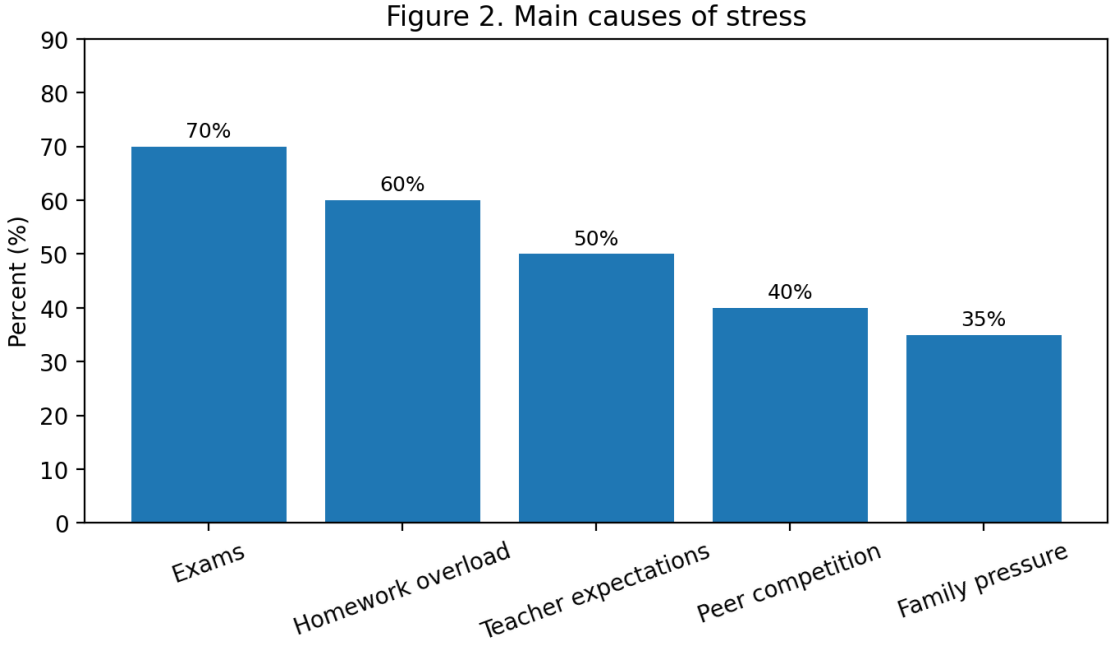


Figure 2. Main causes of stress.

From the stress mapping activity, I noticed that 75% of students feel more stressed before exams and deadlines. Also, 65% of students reported that mathematics lessons are the most stressful, and about 50% mentioned English lessons as stressful subjects.

Table 3. Stress symptoms and sleep-related effects

Symptom / effect	**Students**	**Percentage**
Tiredness	14	70%
Lack of concentration	13	65%
Anxiety	11	55%
Headache	9	45%
Less than 6–7 hours sleep	13	65%

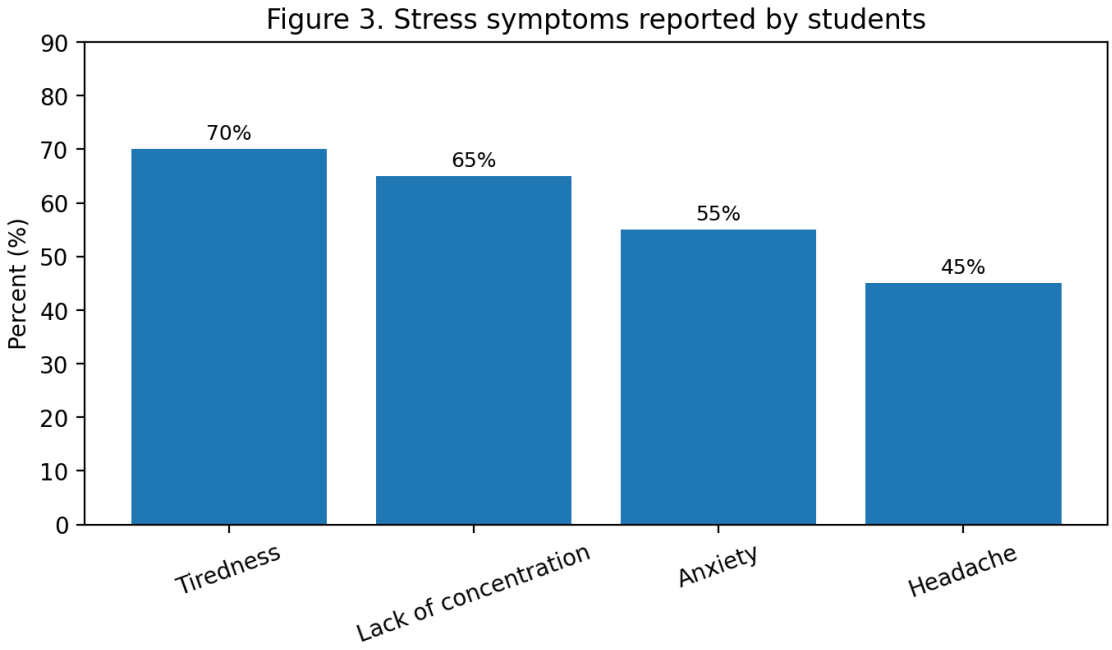


Figure 3. Stress symptoms reported by students.

Students also shared how stress affects them physically and emotionally. For example, 70% said they feel tired, 65% reported lack of concentration, 55% experienced anxiety, and about 45% mentioned headaches. From my observation, these students often looked distracted and less active during lessons.

The weekly stress diary showed that stress also affects students' daily habits. About 65% of students with high stress slept less than 6–7 hours, and these students had more difficulty focusing in class. Around 60% of them showed lower concentration, and 55% had lower participation during lessons.

When I compared stress levels with academic performance, I found that students with high stress levels often had lower results. About 70% of highly stressed students had lower grades, and 60% of them participated less in class activities. However, students with moderate stress sometimes showed better motivation, and about 50% of them had average or stable performance.

Table 4. Coping strategies used by students

Strategy	Students	Percentage
Talk to friends	12	60%

Listen to music	11	55%
Time planning	8	40%
Phone use	13	65%
Procrastination	10	50%
Avoid homework	9	45%

Figure 4. Coping strategies used by students

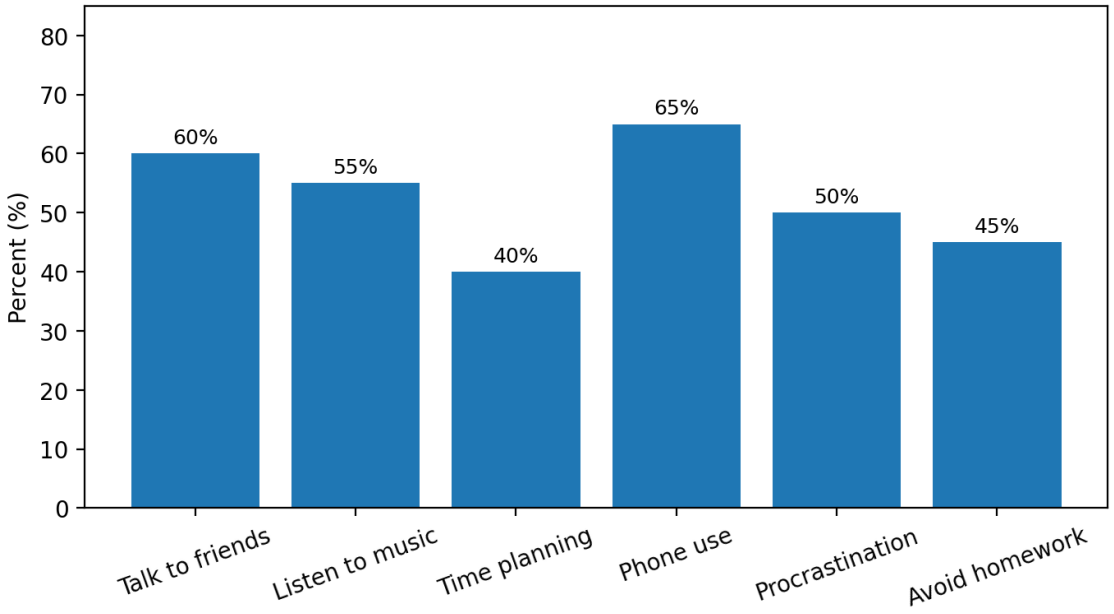


Figure 4. Coping strategies used by students.

Figure 5. Sleep and learning-related effects

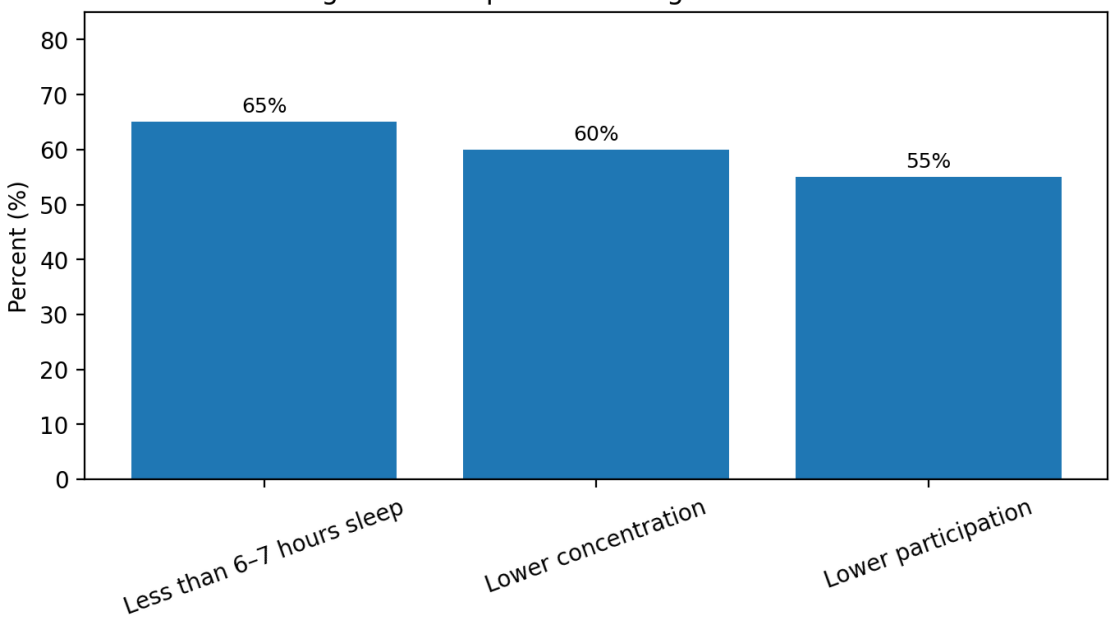


Figure 5. Sleep and learning-related effects.

During interviews, I also asked students how they deal with stress. Some students used positive coping strategies. For example, 60% said they talk to friends, 55% listen to music, and 40% try to plan their time. However, many students also used negative strategies. About 65% said they use their phones too much, 50% procrastinate, and 45% avoid doing homework when they feel stressed. From my point of view, this is one of the main problems. Students know they are stressed, but they do not always choose the right way to deal with it. Overall, the results show that stress affects students' learning in two main ways. First, it directly reduces concentration, memory, and motivation. Second, it indirectly affects learning through sleep problems, tiredness, and low participation.

Discussion. The findings of this study indicate that stress has a significant impact on students' learning process, especially among 8th and 9th grade students. Students who reported higher levels of stress experienced more difficulties in concentration, memory, and classroom participation compared to those with lower stress levels. One possible explanation for these differences is the way students

manage their stress. The results suggest that students with high stress levels often lack effective coping strategies, which negatively affects their academic performance. For example, before exams some students said they feel nervous and cannot focus on the questions, even if they have studied well. In contrast, a few students reported that moderate stress helped them stay motivated and complete their tasks on time. These findings are consistent with previous research, which shows that stress can influence both cognitive and emotional aspects of learning. High stress levels may reduce attention span and memory capacity, while moderate stress can sometimes improve motivation and performance. The results of this study also have important educational implications. They suggest that improving students' academic performance requires not only focusing on teaching materials but also addressing students' emotional well-being. Teachers should help students develop effective stress management strategies, such as time management, relaxation techniques, and positive thinking. However, some limitations should be considered. The research was conducted with a relatively small group of students from one school, which may limit the generalizability of the results. In addition, the short duration of the study may not fully reflect long-term effects of stress on learning. Therefore, future research should include a larger number of participants and a longer observation period.

Conclusion. In conclusion, this study shows that stress has a strong and clear impact on students' learning. High levels of stress negatively affect students' concentration, memory, and academic performance. At the same time, a moderate level of stress can help students stay motivated and responsible. From my point of view, the main problem is not stress itself, but how students deal with it. Many students do not have effective strategies to manage stress, which makes the situation worse. Therefore, teachers should support students by reducing too much pressure and creating a more comfortable learning environment. Students should also learn how to manage their time, control their emotions, and use healthy coping strategies. Overall,

understanding and managing stress can help students improve their learning and feel more confident in their studies.

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