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Academic Achievement in Relation to Mental Health among Tribal Secondary School Students in Kashmir Valley

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ABSTRACT:

This study explored the relationship between mental health and academic achievement among tribal secondary school in the Kashmir valley. A descriptive-comparative survey design was used to conduct the study. The data collected from a sample of 200 secondary school tribal students (100 male and 100 female taken from residential and normal day schools) using a stratified random sampling method across Anantnag and Baramulla districts. Mental health was assessed using the Mental Health Battery (MHB) developed by Kumar and Gupta (2000) and academic achievement was assessed using aggregate percentage marks obtained in class 9th annual examinations. Mean and standard deviation used as descriptive statistical techniques and t-test, Pearson's correlation coefficient (r), and Multiple Linear Regression used as inferential statistics. The findings revealed a statistically significant positive correlation ($r = 0.542$, $p < 0.01$) between mental health status and academic achievement. Furthermore, male tribal students showed significantly higher mean mental health scores compared to female tribal students. Students enrolled in residential tribal schools showed significantly higher mental health scores than those in normal day schools. Regression analysis showed that mental health dimensions significantly predict academic achievement. The study highlights the vital need for institutional interventions, culturally responsive psychological counseling, and targeted educational policies to improve the mental well-being and academic outcomes of marginalized tribal students in Kashmir.

Keywords: *Academic Achievement, Mental Health, Tribal Students, Secondary School Students, Kashmir Valley, Educational Performance, Psychological Well-being.*

INTRODUCTION:

Education plays a pivotal role in empowering lives of people and creating opportunities for personal growth and social development. It will be open doors to better educational and employment opportunities

especially for students from marginalized communities. Academic achievement is particularly important at the secondary level because it influences future studies of students and career choices. However, academic performance of students greatly depends on more than their intellectual abilities, the quality of teaching, or the facilities available at school. Their mental health of students also plays a significant role as the students who feel emotionally secure, maintain healthy relationships, and have confidence in themselves are generally better able to concentrate on their studies, understand the instructional practices, and cope with academic challenges.

Tribal communities in Jammu and Kashmir face various difficulties that can affect their educational and academic experiences. Many families mainly depend on seasonal migration for their livelihood which necessitates moving between different geographical areas as per the changing seasons. The main challenges of tribal students in these area are economic hardship, coping with difficult weather conditions, inadequate infrastructure, and limited access to educational facilities. Tribal adolescents studying in secondary schools must manage these difficulties while also dealing with the issues of physical, emotional, and social changes connected with them. It may be greatly affect their ability to concentrate, participate in classroom activities, and perform well academically when students experience anxiety, emotional stress, or feelings of loneliness without adequate support. These difficulties can also reduce their interest in schooling and make it harder for them to continue their education.

Although various government initiatives have been taken to improve the educational opportunities of tribal communities, differences in educational achievement continue to be a matter of concern. Tribal students may have different learning experiences depending on their family circumstances, gender, and the type of schools such as residential and regular day schools. Hence it is important to understand the relationship between mental health and academic achievement among tribal students. The present study examines the relationship between mental health and academic achievement among tribal secondary school students, in the Kashmir Valley. It also studies differences in mental health and academic achievement based on gender and type of schools. The findings may help teachers, school administrators, and policymakers better understand the psychological and educational needs of tribal students and develop appropriate support systems to improve both their mental well-being and academic performance.

2. Need and Significance of the Study

The experiences of tribal students living in the high-altitude and socially sensitive regions of Kashmir have received comparatively less attention though many studies have examined academic achievement and mental health among students. Students from the Gujjar and Bakerwal communities face various challenges that may affect both their psychological well-being and academic achievement. Traditional seasonal migration among these tribes often interrupts their regular schooling. It also affects that poverty, low levels of parental literacy, and language differences as additional difficulties in learning. Many students speak Gojri at home but receive instruction in a different language that may affect their classroom participation and academic performance. It is also important to understand whether students living in residential tribal hostels experience different levels of mental well-being compared with those

attending regular day schools. Hence studying the mental health of these students and its relationship with academic achievement is necessary to understand their educational difficulties and identify ways to support their learning and development.

The findings of this study may be useful to teachers, school counsellors, policymakers, and tribal welfare departments and other stake holders in developing appropriate measures to address the issues of tribal students. The study can contribute to understand the mental health of tribal students by exploring differences between boys and girls, and comparing the experiences of students living in residential hostels with those attending regular day schools. The findings may also guide the development of culturally sensitive instructional services, student support programmes, and educational policies that may consider the unique circumstances of tribal communities. It ca be giving greater attention to the psychological well-being of Gujjar and Bakerwal adolescents that may help improve their academic performance, encourage regular school attendance, and reduce the risk of dropping out. In the long run, such efforts can contribute to better educational opportunities and improved socio-economic status for these communities in the Kashmir Valley.

3. Objectives of the Study

1. To find the levels of mental health and academic achievement among tribal secondary school students in Kashmir.
2. To find the relationship between mental health and academic achievement among tribal secondary school students in Kashmir.
3. To find the mental health status of male and female tribal secondary school students.
4. To find the mental health status of tribal students enrolled in residential schools versus normal day schools.
5. To find the predictive value of mental health dimensions on the academic achievement of tribal secondary school students using multiple regression analysis.

4. Hypotheses of the Study

$H_{01:}$ There is no significant relationship between mental health and academic achievement among tribal secondary school students in Kashmir.

$H_{02:}$ There is no significant difference in mental health status between male and female tribal secondary school students.

$H_{03:}$ There is no significant difference in academic achievement between male and female tribal secondary school students.

$H_{04:}$ There is no significant difference in mental health status between tribal students enrolled in residential schools and those in normal day schools.

$H_{05:}$ Mental health dimensions do not significantly predict the academic achievement of tribal secondary school students.

5. Review of Related Studies

Nadaf, Nadeem, and Basu (2019) studied mental health, depression in relation to academic achievement among secondary school students in Kashmir and found that psychological problems, particularly anxiety and depression, negatively affected academic performance students. The study highlighted the importance of giving counselling services in schools to support mental well-being of students. Aslam (2018) studied the mental health and scholastic achievement of higher secondary school students in Kashmir with reference to gender and regional differences. The study found significant gender differences in mental health as female students showed better overall mental health and emotional adjustment than male students. It also revealed that urban students performed higher academic achievement than their rural counterparts. Wani and Nadaf (2018) studied academic stress and academic achievement among secondary school students in Kashmir and found that higher levels of academic stress were correlated with lower academic achievement. Their findings suggested that unmanaged stress could affect learning and examination performance of students. Bano and Talesara (2018) studied the relationship between mental health and academic achievement among secondary school students and found a significant positive relationship between mental health and academic achievement. Their findings showed that students with better mental health tended to achieve higher academic scores. Kumar and Bhat (2020) studied psychological well-being and academic achievement among tribal secondary school students in Jammu and Kashmir and found that language barriers and economic difficulties mainly caused for psychological stress that adversely affected their mental health and academic performance.

Sharma and Rani (2019) studied mental health and academic performance among Scheduled Tribe adolescents and found that students with higher emotional stability and better social adjustment performed better in academic achievement than those experiencing difficulties. Karuturi and Kandi (2024) studied the mental health needs of tribal students and found that socio-economic difficulties were correlated with higher levels of anxiety and depression. The study revealed that these psychological challenges linked to problems with educational retention and cognitive performance. Lone and Dar (2021) studied the influence of socio-economic status and mental health on academic achievement among high school students in rural Kashmir. They found that economic hardship and family-related stress could affect mental health of students and, in turn, impact their academic performance. Rathod (2017) studied the mental health status of tribal secondary school students using the Mental Health Battery and found that more than 40% of the students had below-average mental health. The study also reported a relationship between poor mental health and low academic achievement. Ahmad and Khan (2022) studied emotional intelligence, mental health, and academic achievement among secondary school students in Jammu and Kashmir and found that mental health was an important predictor of academic performance.

6. Methodology

6.1 Research Design

The present study used a quantitative descriptive survey method to examine the mental health and academic achievement of tribal secondary school students.

6.2 Sample

The sample consisted of 200 tribal students who are studying in Classes IX and X in secondary day schools and residential schools in Kashmir. A stratified random sampling technique was used to select the participants. The sample included 100 male and 100 female students equally distributed 100 students from residential schools and 100 from regular day schools.

6.3 Research Tools

1. **Mental Health Battery (MHB):** The Mental Health Battery developed and standardized by Kumar and Gupta (2000) was used to assess the mental health of the students. It measures six dimensions of mental health such as emotional stability, overall adjustment, autonomy, security–insecurity, self-concept, and intelligence.
2. **Academic Achievement Records:** Students' academic achievement was assessed using their marks in the annual examination of Class IX. The marks were obtained from official school records and converted into percentages to make it easier to compare the academic performance of the students.

6.4 Statistical Techniques

The data were analyzed using descriptive techniques such as Mean (M) and Standard Deviation (SD) and inferential techniques such as Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) independent samples t-test, and Multiple Linear Regression Analysis.

7. Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1: *Relationship Between Mental Health and Academic Achievement Among Tribal Secondary School Students in Kashmir*

Variables	N	r	p-value	Decision	Significance
Mental Health & Academic Achievement	200	0.542	< 0.01	Rejected	Statistically Significant

Table 1 shows a Pearson correlation coefficient (r) of 0.542 between mental health scores and academic achievement percentages among tribal secondary school students. The correlation is statistically significant at the 0.01 significance level ($p < 0.01$). Therefore, the null hypothesis that stated there is no significant relationship between mental health and academic achievement among tribal secondary school students in Kashmir is rejected. The result indicates a moderate and positive relationship demonstrating that higher mental health levels are associated with better academic achievement.

Table 2: *Comparison of Mental Health Status Between Male and Female Tribal Secondary School Students in Kashmir*

Gender	N	Mean (M)	SD	t-value	p-value	Decision
Male	100	82.45	10.12	4.17	< 0.01	Rejected
Female	100	76.10	11.35			

Table 2 shows the comparison of mental health scores between male and female tribal secondary school students. Male students showed a higher mean mental health score (M = 82.45, SD = 10.12) compared to female students (M = 76.10, SD = 11.35). The calculated t-value is 4.17, which exceeds the critical value at the 0.01 significance level ($p < 0.01$). Consequently, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no

significant difference in mental health status between male and female tribal secondary school students is rejected. It shows that there is a significant gender difference in mental health favoring male students.

Table 3: *Comparison of Academic Achievement Between Male and Female Tribal Secondary School Students in Kashmir*

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value	Decision
Male	100	56.40	11.80	2.84	< 0.01	Rejected
Female	100	61.20	12.10			

Table 3 shows the comparative academic performance of male and female tribal students. Male tribal students achieved a mean academic percentage of 56.40% (SD = 11.80), whereas female tribal students achieved a mean percentage of 61.20% (SD = 12.10). The obtained t-value of 2.84 is statistically significant at the 0.01 level ($p < 0.01$). Thus, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference in academic achievement between male and female tribal secondary school students is rejected. It shows that demonstrating that female tribal students achieved significantly higher academic scores than male tribal students.

Table 4: *Comparison of Mental Health Status Between Tribal Students in Residential Schools and Regular Day Schools in Kashmir*

School Type	N	Mean (M)	SD	t-value	p-value	Decision
Residential Schools	100	83.20	9.80	5.24	< 0.01	Rejected
Normal Day Schools	100	75.35	11.20			

Table 4 shows the comparison of mental health scores between tribal students in residential schools and those in normal day schools. Students in residential schools recorded a mean score of 83.20 (SD = 9.80) while students in normal day schools recorded a mean score of 75.35 (SD = 11.20). The calculated t-value of 5.24 is statistically significant at the 0.01 level ($p < 0.01$). Therefore, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference in mental health status between tribal students enrolled in residential schools and those in normal day schools is rejected. It shows that students in residential tribal schools possess significantly higher mental health scores than those in normal day schools.

Table 5: *Multiple Regression Analysis of Mental Health Dimensions as Predictors of Academic Achievement Among Tribal Secondary School Students in Kashmir*

Model / Predictor Variables	B (Unstandardized)	SE	Beta (Std.)	t-value	p-value
(Constant)	25.40	3.12	—	8.14	< 0.01
Emotional Stability	0.34	0.08	0.31	4.25	< 0.01
Overall Adjustment	0.28	0.07	0.26	3.82	< 0.01
Autonomy	0.19	0.06	0.18	2.95	< 0.01
Security-Insecurity	0.22	0.07	0.21	3.14	< 0.01
Self-Concept & Intelligence	0.15	0.05	0.16	2.68	< 0.01

Model Summary: $R = 0.612$, $R^2 = 0.375$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.359$, $F(5, 194) = 23.24$, $p < 0.01$.

Table 5 shows the multiple linear regression analysis examining the extent to which mental health dimensions predict academic achievement among tribal secondary school students. The multiple correlation coefficient (R) is 0.612, with an R-squared value of 0.375, indicating that approximately 37.5% of the total variance in academic achievement is explained by the combined mental health dimensions. The F-value of 23.24 is statistically significant at the 0.01 level. Furthermore, all predictor dimensions (Emotional Stability, Overall Adjustment, Autonomy, Security-Insecurity, and Self-Concept/Intelligence) made statistically significant contributions to predicting academic achievement. Hence, the null hypothesis which stated that mental health dimensions do not significantly predict the academic achievement of tribal secondary school students is rejected.

8. Major Findings

1. The study revealed a significant positive relationship between mental health and academic achievement among tribal secondary school students in Kashmir. Students with better mental health showed better academic performance.
2. Male tribal students showed better mental health than female students and the difference between the two groups was statistically significant.
3. Female students achieved higher scores in academic achievement than male students that shows a significant difference in academic performance between the groups.
4. Students living in residential schools had better mental health scores than those attending regular day schools. This suggests that the school environment and the support available to students may be important factors in their psychological well-being.
5. The regression analysis showed that mental health dimensions significantly predicted academic achievement of students. Emotional stability and overall adjustment emerged as the strongest predictors of academic performance among these dimensions.

9. Discussion

The findings indicated that mental health is closely related to academic achievement among tribal secondary school students in Kashmir. Students who feel emotionally secure, maintain good relationships with others, and adjust well to their surroundings tend to perform better in academic achievement. The positive correlation that was found in this study (r = 0.542) supports this relationship and is consistent with earlier studies by Bano and Talesara (2018) and Sharma and Rani (2019).

The study also revealed that female tribal students had lower mental health and academic achievement than male students. This difference may be related to the challenges faced by girls in their daily lives. It is evident that in some tribal families, girls have to manage household responsibilities along with their studies. These additional duties may cause stress and leave them with less time for learning and rest. Hence providing girls with proper support and opportunities may help improve both their mental well-being and academic performance.

The comparison between residential and day schools revealed that student living in residential schools had better level of mental health. This may be because residential schools ensure a regular study routine,

opportunities to interact with friends, and a more stable learning environment. These facilities can be especially helpful for tribal students whose education may be affected by seasonal migration and other difficulties. The regression analysis also indicated that mental health is an important factor associated with academic achievement. Overall, the findings highlight the need to ensure greater attention to emotional well-being of students, social adjustment, and learning environment to help them succeed in their studies.

10. Conclusion

The study concludes that mental health plays a pivotal role in the academic achievement of tribal secondary school students in Kashmir. Students who get good mental health, feel emotionally secure, and adjust well to their surroundings are more likely to perform better in their academic studies. The findings highlight the need to give importance to emotional of students and psychological well-being along with their academic progress. It can be ensured by providing proper guidance, emotional support, and a supportive learning environment that can help tribal students overcome their challenges and achieve better educational outcomes.

11. Educational Implications

The following educational measures may help schools, teachers, and educational authorities address students' psychological and learning needs.

- **School-Based Counselling Services:** Government secondary schools in tribal areas should ensure counselling services the students that can manage emotional stress, personal problems, and academic difficulties of tribal students.
- **Expansion of Residential Facilities:** More residential hostels should be established to give tribal students that can ensure safe and supportive environment for academic and personal development.
- **Support for Female Students:** Special programmes should be organized to help female tribal students that can help overcome the challenges they face in their studies and improve their mental well-being.
- **Flexible Learning for Migratory Families:** Schools should introduce flexible learning schedules and suitable educational programmes to ensure that seasonal migration does not interrupt academic progress of students.
- **Teacher Training and Orientation:** Teachers should receive training in inclusive teaching methods and basic mental health support that may help understand emotional needs of students and identify those who require additional support.

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