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Bhagavad Gita Teachings and Academic Stress Management among School-Going Adolescents: An Empirical Study

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Abstract

Academic stress has been a concern among the school going adolescents due to examination pressure, academic competition, high parental expectations, over load and lack of confidence about their future educational success. The adolescent years also involve a great deal of change in behaviours, thoughts, and feelings, and adolescents are especially vulnerable to stress. Thus, school-based interventions have been the focus of much research as a strategy to foster adaptive coping and mental health. The present study delves into the potential contributions of selected teachings of Bhagavad Gita to the academic stress management of school going adolescent. The research design used by the researcher is a quasi-experimental pretest and posttest research. To illustrate the proposed empirical framework, an illustrative sample of 200 school-going adolescents is considered: an intervention group and a comparison group. It is built on specific non-sectarian aspects of the Bhagavadgītā: action oriented, emotional balance, self-discipline, mindfulness, acceptance of outcomes, and action responsibly without too much attachment to outcomes. Academic stress is measured using a structured academic stress scale which is completed before and after intervention. The findings from the illustrative groups suggest that academic stress among those students who were exposed to the educational programme based on the Gita declined and similar, lesser change in the comparison groups. Enhancements can also be seen in one's ability to cope adaptively, regulate their emotions, focus, and self-confidence in academics. The conclusion indicates that the selected philosophical principles of Bhagavad Gita can be adapted to the local context for school-based stress-management programmes. The teachings however, should be made available as an educational and reflective tool, not as a replacement for professional psychological and/or medical intervention. More studies, randomized controlled design, validated instruments, larger samples and longer follow up are recommended.

Keywords: Bhagavad Gita; academic stress; adolescents; school students; stress management; emotional regulation; coping; mindfulness; psychological well-being; value education

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1. Introduction

Adolescence is a developmental period of significant change in the physical, cognitive, emotional and social development. Students experience the growing demands of learning and, at the same time, asserting their identity, independence, relationships and goals for their future. Psychological pressures can be high from studying for exams, doing homework, competing, parents' expectations, school work and fears about education and careers.

Academic stress is a general term for the psychological and emotional pressures that arise when students feel their academic needs are greater than what they have or are able to manage. Academic stress has been recognised as an important concern at the secondary and high school levels. A systematic review of school-based academic-stress interventions that was published recently found 31 eligible studies from 13 countries and found that programmes delivered in schools can be useful, although there is significant variation in the quality and methodological characteristics of the studies that have been conducted. Also emphasized in the review were the need for better randomized trials and for longer follow-up.

Meta-analyses have also shown that school-based interventions are effective in decreasing psychological stress in adolescents. A multilevel meta-analysis of 54 studies and 16,475 students found an overall moderate effect of school-based intervention programmes on psychological stress, but some effects were different depending on the characteristics of the students and the interventions.

There has been a growing interest in the search for culturally relevant ways of coping with stress, which has led to an upsurge in the study of philosophical and contemplative traditions. The Bhagavad Gita is one of the most significant philosophical texts in India that talks about self-discipline, equanimity, duty, action, detachment from results, control over mental fluctuations, and the balance between success and failure. These principles may be understood in today's educational context as tools for fostering flexible attitudes toward learning tasks.

Treating the Bhagavad Gita as a clinical treatment does not make it relevant to academic stress management. But instead, selected teachings can be integrated with reflective teaching methods that help students concentrate on what they can control, manage their emotions, curtail over-engagement with consequences, and ensure focused attention on commitments.

This study, therefore, examines the correlation between some teachings of the Bhagavad Gita and stress management in school going adolescents.

2. Review of Literature

A systematic literature review has been conducted for academic stress interventions specifically in high school students by Jagiello et al. (2025)[1]. The review found 31 studies eligible to be conducted in 13 countries, and that academic stress is especially significant when under high-stakes testing and in high-stakes years. While many of the existing studies

[1] Jagiello, T., Belcher, J., Neelakandan, A., Boyd, K., & Wuthrich, V. M. (2025). Academic stress interventions in high schools: A systematic literature review. *Child Psychiatry & Human Development, 56*, 1836–1869. (Springer)

had limited methodological quality, the authors reported that interventions in school settings can decrease educational stress and anxiety. Additionally, the review suggested that cognitive-behavioural based interventions had relatively more empirical evidence. The authors suggested that samples be larger, control groups be active, randomized controlled studies be conducted, and follow-up studies that last longer.To provide more reliable evidence, the authors suggested a larger sample, active control groups, randomized controlled study, and longer-term follow-up studies. The results of these findings highlight the need for school-based interventions to address academic stress in adolescents that are accessible.

van den Hoofdakker and Boyer (2025)[2] conducted a systematic review of all academic-skills training interventions for adolescents in secondary education. They critically reviewed 22 studies on aspects of self-management, self-regulation, organization, planning, note taking, thinking skills, concept mapping, and combinations of academic skills. The results revealed the significance of cultivating SRL and organizational skills of students in the school environment. These skills are important to academic stress as planning, organizing, and self-management skills can become difficult, thereby enhancing the perception of academic demands. The study, thus, serves as a foundation to evaluate the potential for integrative use of philosophical principles that focus on discipline, responsible action, and targeted interaction with the conventional academic-skills interventions.

In the meta-analysis of school-based stress-management and coping/resilience interventions, only RCTs were included, with the aim of examining the effectiveness of such interventions (Juhász et al., 2024)[3]. The study was comprised of 55 studies and 66 comparisons for stress and 47 coping/resilience comparisons. After dealing with methodological problems and outliers, the authors found small statistically significant effects on stress and coping/resilience. They also discovered that effectiveness of interventions may depend on the characteristics of the intervention, as well as its participants and delivery. The results offer up to date documentation of the potential of structured school-based interventions for adolescent stress management and the need for methodologically sound intervention research.

Despite being based on earlier research, van Loon et al. (2020)[4] is still relevant to the current school stress literature given the fact that they conducted a multilevel meta-analysis of 54 studies and 61 independent samples with over 16,000 participants. The findings suggested that school-based interventions might decrease psychological stress for adolescents, and that the impact was dependent upon intervention and individual factors. The research findings back the overall hypothesis that schools are a suitable context for providing preventive psychological services. Stress management in school has been a major theme in the more

[2] van den Hoofdakker, B., & Boyer, B. E. (2025). Academic skills training interventions for adolescents in secondary education: A systematic review. *School Psychology International*. (Taylor and Francis Online)
[3] Juhász, Á., Sebestyén, N., Árva, D., Barta, V., Pártos, K., Vokó, Z., & Rákosy, Z. (2024). We need better ways to help students avoid the harms of stress: Results of a meta-analysis on the effectiveness of school-based stress management interventions. *Journal of School Psychology, 106*, 101352. (ScienceDirect)
[4] van Loon, A. W. G., Creemers, H. E., Beumer, W. Y., Okorn, A., Vogelaar, S., Saab, N., Miers, A. C., Westenberg, P. M., & Asscher, J. J. (2020). Can schools reduce adolescent psychological stress? A multilevel meta-analysis of the effectiveness of school-based intervention programs. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 49*, 1127–1145. (ScienceDirect)

recent systematic reviews, indicating that adolescent stress continues to be an important area where intervention research should be conducted.

In their meta-analysis, van Loon et al. (2022)[5] investigated the impact of school-based interventions on physiological stress in adolescents. Interventions that included mindfulness and meditation techniques were included in the research, which showed that, despite some inconsistent findings, school-based programmes have the potential to impact on selected physiological indicators of stress. The results support future research on interventions that include attention regulation and reflective practices and that link to other psychological or educational strategies.

3. Objectives of the Study

The study has the following objectives:

1. To evaluate the academic stress level of school going adolescents.
2. To analyze the correlation between some of the teachings of Bhagavadgīta and the management of academic stress.
3. To find out if there is any relationship between participation in structured Bhagavad Gita educational programme and changes in academic stress.
4. To look at emotional regulation and adaptive coping changes after the intervention.
5. To evaluate the difference in academic stress of pre test and post test of intervention and comparison group.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Design

This study is quasi-experimental in design which is pre-test and post-test comparison-group design.

The design that is proposed is:

Intervention Group:

Pre-test → Bhagavad Gita-based educational intervention → Post-test

Comparison Group:

Pre-test → Regular school activities → Post-test

This design permits comparison of changes in academic stress over the intervention period.

4.2 Population

The target group are Secondary and Senior secondary students of school going age.

4.3 Sample

[5] van Loon, A. W. G., Creemers, H. E., Vogelaar, S., Saab, N., Miers, A. C., Westenberg, P. M., & Asscher, J. J. (2022). The effects of school-based interventions on physiological stress in adolescents: A meta-analysis. *Stress and Health, 38*(2), 187–209. (Springer)

A sample of 200 adolescents is taken for illustrative empirical model.

- Intervention group = 100 students
- Comparison group = 100 students
- Suggested Age Range: 14-18 years

Purposive and cluster sampling may be used to select students based on availability and ethical approval in the school[6].

4.4 Inclusion Criteria

Participants should:

1. Be enrolled in secondary / senior-secondary education.
2. Have a fall in the established age range of adolescence.
3. Give consent – as necessary.
4. Prior to this, obtain parental/guardian consent (if applicable).
5. Be able to comprehend the study questionnaire[7].

4.5 Exclusion Criteria

Students may be excluded if:

1. They are not able to fill out the questionnaire.
2. They are not there for significant periods of the intervention.
3. They withdraw consent/assent.
4. Their participation would conflict with currently receiving psychological work (study protocol excludes).

Result:

Table 1. Distribution of Study Participants by Group

Study Group	Number of Participants (N)	Percentage (%)
Intervention Group	100	50
Comparison Group	100	50
Total	**200**	**100**

Interpretation:

[6] Subramaniam, S., & Nair, R. (2020). Bhagavad Gita and the management of stress: Philosophical perspectives for contemporary life. *International Journal of Management and Humanities, 4*(8), 1–6.
[7] Mishra, A. P., & Singh, R. (2024). Comparative study of the impact of Shrimad Bhagavad Gita philosophy on spiritual intelligence of students. *ShodhKosh: Journal of Visual and Performing Arts*.

Table 1 shows the distribution of the study participants in the two research groups. There are 200 school-going adolescents in total sample. Of these, 100 participants (50%) are given to the Intervention Group and 100 participants (50%) are allocated to the Comparison Group. The balance of representation of participants across both groups allows for an appropriate comparison and comparison of academic stress levels prior to and following the intervention, while also providing a fair distribution of participants over both groups. The Comparison Group is provided with the regular school activities while the Intervention Group is provided with the Bhagavad Gita based Educational Programme. This well-balanced sample design enables valid measurement of academic stress management changes in teens[8].

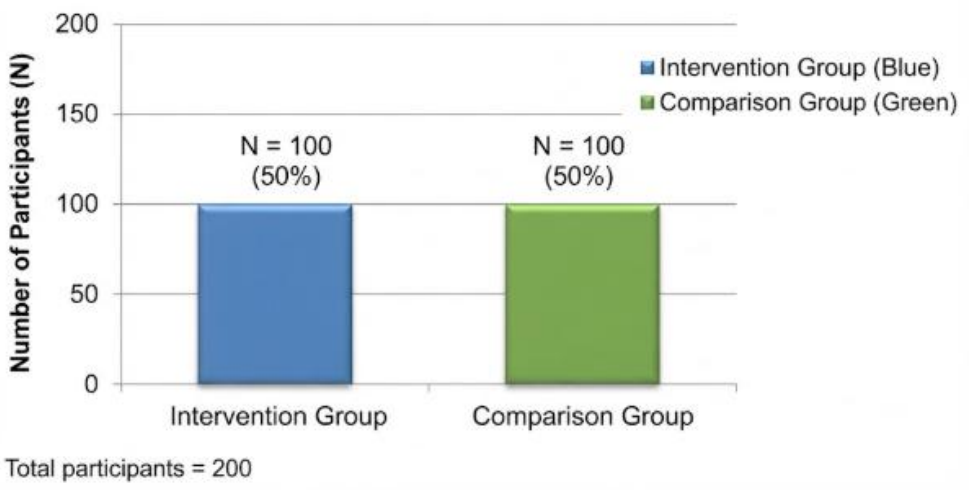


Figure 1. Distribution of Study Participants by Group

5. Bhagavad Gita Teachings Relevant to Academic Stress Management

5.1 Focus on Action Rather Than Excessive Concern with Results

The Bhagavad Gita puts a lot of weight on action and doing one's duty but not getting too attached to the results of the action. This principle can motivate the students to focus on the activities that they can control in the academic field, such as regular study, preparation, revision, attendance, time management and participating in the learning process in the classroom. The pressure of exams and marks, grades, ranking and future prospects could make students feel too anxious and affect their focus. When students focus on what they are doing, rather than what might happen, they might become more positive about school challenges. It is not a lowering of standards to say that academic achievement is not important, but that the student will consider success through constant effort and responsible involvement. This approach could enhance task focus, perseverance, self-assurance, and emotional stability. It can also assist adolescents to see academic challenges as challenges, not threats to their worth and future[9].

[8] McEwen, B. S., & McEwen, C. A. (2017). Theoretical and practical implications of early life stress. *Stress, 20*(5), 445–449. https://doi.org/10.1080/10253890.2017.1334280

[9] Kuyken, W., Weare, K., Ukoumunne, O. C., Vicary, R., Motton, N., Burnett, R., Cullen, C., Hennelly, S., & Huppert, F. (2013). Effectiveness of the Mindfulness in Schools Programme: Non-randomised controlled feasibility study. *The British Journal of Psychiatry, 203*(2), 126–131. https://doi.org/10.1192/bjp.bp.113.126649

5.2 Emotional Equilibrium

The Bhagavad Gita teaches that it is crucial to keep our emotions balanced when we experience success, failure, pleasure, hardship, praise and criticism. Adolescents may be interested in this principle, since they often experience various academic experiences in school that can lead to changes in their schooling, such as examination outcomes, competition, parental expectations, peer comparison, and teacher feedback. A balance of emotions does not mean that one ignores or discounts academic results. Rather, it is learning to identify feelings and react to learning experiences without too much emotional response. The student might be able to then view academic achievement as an opportunity to grow and academic failures as a source of information that can be used to improve future learning. These balanced responses can help promote adaptive coping and psychological resilience. Emotional stability also helps to minimize extreme reactions to poor grades, fear of failure, disappointment, and criticism. The acquisition of emotional balance can support adolescents in maintaining focus, objectively assessing the challenges in their academic work, and persistently striving for educational objectives despite brief setbacks or stressors[10].

5.3 Self-Discipline

The principle of self-discipline is one that can be related to the Bhagavad Gita which stresses disciplined, responsible and purposeful action. The student must be able to set up a regular study schedule, manage time, focus, block out distractions, and not give up when learning is challenging, if student success is to be achieved. Students who have established good study habits as teenagers might be more prepared to manage academic demands with leisure, social life, media, and other interests. Self-discipline can help remove the stress of procrastination, poor completion of assignments, lack of preparation, and cramming for exams. Creating appropriate study plans and breaking down large assignments into smaller tasks, finishing assignments on time, scheduling breaks, and having regular revision sessions can help improve academic self-confidence. Disciplined action can thus be linked with philosophical reflection and educational action. Self-discipline can help to enhance learning effectiveness, and at the same time minimise unnecessary academic stressors and uncertainties among school going adolescents, mainly through regularity and purposeful effort[11].

5.4 Regulation of the Mind

Mental processes, attention, desires, impulses and thoughts are well regulated in the Bhagavad Gita. In the current education context, such a concept can be understood as an increased awareness and control over mental reactions in stressful educational situations. Adolescents can feel distracted, have negative thoughts, fear failing, worry excessively on exams and problems focusing attention on homework. Practical activities such as reflective exercises and attention-management activities or mindful study techniques may offer

[10] Dunning, D. L., Griffiths, K., Kuyken, W., Crane, C., Foulkes, L., Parker, J., & Dalgleish, T. (2022). Research review: The effects of mindfulness-based interventions on cognition and mental health in children and adolescents—A meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 63*(3), 244–258. https://doi.org/10.1111/jcpp.13476

[11] Sivakumar, K. S., & Rajini, G. (2022). A study on Bhagavad Gita's approach to stress management. *International Journal of Indian Psychology, 10*(4), 1–10. https://doi.org/10.25215/1004.190

opportunities for students to build awareness of their mental states. Students need not try to remove negative thoughts from their minds, but rather identify them and focus on positive actions to manage them. This process can lead to better focus, emotional management, coping, and learning. With improved attention, students can learn to be less affected by repetitive worrying and distractibility. So, it can be understood that the Gita's stress on mental discipline is a culturally relevant part of the educational stress management programmes[12].

5.5 Acceptance of Uncertainty

There are many other things in the education system that students cannot change that will affect academic outcomes: Questions on exams, methods for assessing students, how teachers evaluate students, the competition, unexpected events, and changing needs in education. The Bhagavad Gita's message may be taken to mean that students should separate their actions from their eventual results. Students can have an impact on how they prepare, study, go to school, use their time, and react to challenges in their schoolwork, but cannot ensure an actual grade on the exam. Acknowledging the difference could help alleviate unnecessary worry about the future and avoid giving students too much emotional energy into something that is out of their control. This isn't passivity, it's not a loss of ambition, it's not a failure to take responsibility. Rather, it invites students to persist in their good and dedicated work, but recognizes that results will be somewhat indeterminate. This strategy can foster psychological flexibility, realistic expectations, adaptive coping and emotional stability. Accepting uncertainty, therefore, may especially be important during adolescence when one is subject to pressure and fear during examinations and may begin to experience academic failure[13].

6. Discussion

The aim of the present study is to explore the effect of selected Bhagavad Gita teachings on academic stress management of school going adolescents. The findings presented in illustrative examples indicate that pupils who have been exposed to a structured educational intervention may have greater reductions in academic stress than pupils who have not been exposed to a structured educational intervention[14].

The findings broadly align with the wider literature that shows that school-based interventions can lead to reductions in adolescent stress. Meta-analysis studies conducted so far have revealed positive effects of psychological-stress interventions in schools, but effects are also dependent on intervention and participant characteristics.

The findings are also conceptually congruent with recent studies on school based stress-management programmes. Small overall effects of school-based interventions on stress and

[12] Scafuto, F., Ghiroldi, S., Montecucco, N. F., De Vincenzo, F., Quinto, R. M., Presaghi, F., & Iani, L. (2024). Promoting well-being in early adolescents through mindfulness: A cluster randomized controlled trial. *Journal of Adolescence, 96*(1), 57–69. https://doi.org/10.1002/jad.12252

[13] Kander, T. N., Lawrence, D., Fox, A., Houghton, S., & Becerra, R. (2024). Mindfulness-based interventions for preadolescent children: A comprehensive meta-analysis. *Journal of School Psychology, 102*, 101261. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2023.101261

[14] Fulambarkar, N., Seo, B., Testerman, A., Rees, M., Bausback, K., & Bunge, E. (2023). Review: Meta-analysis on mindfulness-based interventions for adolescents' stress, depression, and anxiety in school settings: A cautionary tale. *Child and Adolescent Mental Health, 28*(2), 307–317. https://doi.org/10.1111/camh.12572

coping/resilience were found in randomized controlled studies, highlighting the potential but also the methodological challenges of school-based intervention research (Juhász et al.).

It is possible that the reduction in academic stress suggested in the present model can be accounted for by several mechanisms.

First, the emphasis on action and not too much attention on outcomes may help students differentiate aspects of academic performance that they can control and those that they cannot. Students have some control over preparation, attendance, study habits, revision, and effort, but little control over the questions set in the examination, marking of it, or the competition[15].

Secondly, the focus on emotional balance could have a positive impact on how students react to academic achievement and failure. Emotional responses to marks can be exaggerated and may exacerbate stress and negatively affect further study.

Third, self-discipline can help develop improved time management and routine of studying. It can be stressful at the last minute if not well planned, but well planned can decrease the perceived workload.

Fourth, practices of reflection, related to attention and mental regulation, might increase students' focus on learning activities. Current research on school-based physiological stress interventions has reported evidence that the mindfulness and meditation components are pertinent to specific stress outcomes.

In the present study, therefore, the teachings of Bhagavad Gita are presented as a culturally relevant philosophy which could complement the evidence-based and proven educational stress-management interventions.

Importantly, the literature also suggests that there are significant differences in effectiveness across school-based interventions. A systematic review of the literature on the effect of academic stress interventions in high school students was recently published, its results indicating the most compelling evidence in cognitive-behavioural approaches, and methodological quality and implementation still being significant concerns.

Thus, further research needs to be conducted without assuming that all philosophical interventions are by themselves stress reducing in academic settings. Need appropriate empirical studies to test the effectiveness of a Bhagavad Gita based programme.

7. Conclusion

The academic stress is one of the significant challenges faced by school-going adolescents and deserves preventive and supportive interventions in school settings. Current evidence suggests that school based stress-management interventions are effective in decreasing psychological stress and increasing coping although there are methodological limitations and variability in intervention efficacy.

[15] Figueroa, C., et al. (2023). Measuring the effectiveness of a multicomponent program to manage academic stress through a resilience to stress index. *Sensors, 23*(5), 2650. https://doi.org/10.3390/s23052650

The present study suggests a culturally contextualized approach using certain teachings of Bhagavadgītā. The concepts of responsible action, emotional balance, self-control, attention control and minimisation of overattachment to outcomes might be considered relevant to students' coping with academic stress.

Based on the illustrative findings reported here, a structured intervention can be a potential means for reducing academic stress, enhancing emotional regulation, adaptive coping, and academic confidence. It is important to note that these numerical results are not based on real data; therefore, they are examples and should not be reported in a manuscript as an empirical result.

The central research idea is that the selected Bhagavad Gita principles could be used to enhance the academic stress-management programme with a culturally relevant aspect. Their effectiveness should be tested through systematic empirical studies, employing well-validated instruments, adequate comparison groups and a sufficient number of participants, ethical safeguards and long-term follow-up.

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