

Poster

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Poster 34

[P-34-03] Perceived Academic Stress and Adolescent Mental Health in Singapore: The Protective Role of Resilience

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Introduction

In Singapore, academic success is culturally central, and stress from academic expectations contributes significantly to mental distress. However, less is known about how this stress differs across developmental stages and the protective role of resilience. This study examines how stress from academic expectations impacts internalising symptoms across adolescence and identifies resilience domains that buffer internalizing symptoms in Singaporean adolescents.

Methods

A sample of Singaporean adolescents aged 11–18 ($n = 3,336$) completed self-report measures: Academic Expectations Stress Inventory (AESI), Youth Self Report (YSR), and Singapore Youth Resilience Scale (SYRESS). Participants were grouped into early (11–12), early-middle (13–14), late-middle (15–16), and late adolescence (17–18). Moderated regression analyses examined age and resilience as moderators of the relationship between perceived academic stress and internalising symptoms.

Results

Perceived academic stress from self ($\beta = 1.31$, $p < .001$) and others ($\beta = 1.05$, $p < .001$) were associated with higher internalizing symptoms. Adolescents aged 15–16 reported significantly higher distress ($\beta = 1.62$, $p < .05$), with age groups 2 and 3 moderating the effect of academic stress due to self-expectations. After accounting for age, resilience significantly moderated the impact of both self- and others-imposed academic stress. Domain-level analysis revealed that personal control, positive self-image/optimism, and emotional regulation were the most protective ($p < .001$, $f^2 = 0.017-0.023$) with medium–large effect sizes. For stress from parent/teacher expectations, these domains remained protective ($f^2s = 0.011-0.014$; all $p < .001$), with medium effect sizes.

Conclusion

Mid-adolescence is a sensitive period where self-imposed academic stress contribute to internalizing symptoms. Resilience—particularly personal control, positive self-image, and emotional regulation moderate and serve as critical buffers of perceived academic stress.

These findings underscore the importance of culturally sensitive, developmentally informed interventions that enhance domain-specific resilience to reduce mental distress among adolescents navigating academic pressures in Singapore.